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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[AN UNTIMELY INTERRUPTION.]

HER BITTER FOE; OR, A STRUGGLE FOR A HEART.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Lost Through Gold," "Strong Temptation,"

&c., &c.

CHAPTER X.

TWO WOMEN'S LOVE.

The love of women it is known
To be a deadly and a fearful thing.

NOTHING could exceed Rosalie Norton's satisfaction on her return from the ball, where she had danced for the first time with Keith. She had had her wish. She had met her hero on equal ground. It was no longer the gambler's daughter on whom the young man of rank bestowed a kindly word from mere pity. It was an heiress, noted for her wealth no less than for her beauty, a girl of his own order, to whom he had chosen to devote himself. Rosalie's hopes ran high.

"I think I never enjoyed anything so much in my life," she said to her aunt, as they drove swiftly homewards.

"And yet this is the England you wilfully refused to return to," said Mrs. Norton, smiling.

"Confess, Rosalie, you made a mistake."

"I think not," said the girl, slowly, shading her face with her shapely hand. "I fancy I returned from Italy just at the right time."

Mrs. Norton felt puzzled. There were moments when she could not in the least understand her niece. Despairing of finding out Rosalie's meaning she took up another subject.

"Did you like the Jocelyns, dear?"

"Very much," eagerly. "Lady Jocelyn is such a dear old lady, and Maude has just the sweetest face in the world."

"You are not often so enthusiastic about people. And what did you think of Keith?"

"I thought him handsome," trying to speak calmly and indifferently.

"Yes, they will be a charming couple."

Rosalie's heart sank.

"Is he engaged?"

"I fancy it is not announced yet, but there can be no doubt he will marry Ethel Devreux."

"Why?" a little sharply. "Why should Mr. Jocelyn's matrimonial plans be settled for him?"

Mrs. Norton laughed.

"How funnily you put it, Rosalie. Miss Devreux has always been more at Jocelyn Manor than her own home. She is the darling of the whole family. Lady Jocelyn loves her as well as her own daughters."

"Young men don't always marry to please their families."

"No, but it is a good thing when they do."

"Besides," persisted Rosalie, "those ready-made matches never take place. Depend upon it, Miss Devreux is too much of a sister to Mr. Jocelyn for him to think of her as a wife."

"Well, we shall be able to judge better to-morrow," returned Mrs. Norton, tired of the

argument, and reclining comfortably in the corner of the carriage, as though she wished for silence.

Rosalie Norton took an unusual time about her toilet on the following day. Never had her maid found her so hard to please. The truth was Rosalie felt that a crisis had come in her love story. She was going for the first time to Keith's home—the home that might be her own—and she wished to look her best and most attractive.

She succeeded perfectly. A soft cambric costume of some pale shade of pink, trimmed here and there with soft lace, a shady hat with long white feathers, her beautiful face a trifle more thoughtful than usual as she followed her aunt into the morning-room where Lady Jocelyn received her intimates.

One glance told Rosalie that Keith was absent. A fair, tall young man, whose arms seemed a great embarrassment to him, was bending over Ethel's chair. Maude made room for Miss Norton on the sofa beside herself.

"I am so glad you have come. I want to introduce you to Miss Devreux. She is my oldest friend."

The introduction followed. Rosalie bowed with charming grace, Ethel with studied coolness. Maude, vexed at her favourite's ungraciousness, drew her new friend to a recess between the windows.

"Do you like photographs?"

Rosalie was spared a reply by Keith's entrance. He greeted Mrs. Norton warmly, nodded to the Marquis of Allonby, and then wandered over to his sister and her companion.

"And how are you after last night's fatigues,

Miss Norton? You do not look as though you had danced till the small hours."

"Ah, but I am rested now."

They entered into conversation, and Maude noticed that their tastes agreed rarely well. She began to wonder if Ethel's stray shot would be fulfilled, and Lord Norton's heiress win her brother's heart.

Rosalie had a charm of manner all her own. She had not mixed in the highest society in Italy for nothing. She was a thorough mistress of the art of fascination; her glorious eyes looked full into Keith's as she talked to him.

Maude Jocelyn, the most unsuspicious of girls, noticed that whenever Miss Norton spoke, even though the words were addressed to herself, the spirit of them was for Keith.

So Rosalie was established as a favoured guest at Lady Jocelyn's, and through the first part of the London season the beautiful Miss Norton was a frequent visitor at Cadogan Street.

The proud young heiress, who had more lovers at her feet than she cared to count, would have given up the most important engagement, the most delightful ball, for the sake of a quiet evening at the earl's, and no one guessed the reason save the girl whose eyes were sharpened by jealous love and anxious grief.

It never occurred to anyone but Ethel Devreux that Rosalie had given her heart to Keith Jocelyn and would never rest until she had gained him in return.

Very early in their acquaintance Ethel saw all. From the dawning love in her own heart she could understand the fatal passion in Rosalie's. It was rivalry to the death between them. They both loved him. He could return but one passion. They were struggling for his heart.

And they met almost every day, these two girls, of whom one must make the other's sorrow. They stood opposite each other in the mazes of the dance, they sat side by side in the same carriage, with smiles on their lips they exchanged greetings and farewells, and yet all the while a fierce pain burnt at their hearts, an eager longing to know which of them would be successful in the struggle, which Keith would make his wife.

There was a wide difference in their love, a difference almost as great as in the girls themselves. Rosalie would have been content to suffer any degradation for his sake; if only Keith would love her she would have thought the whole world well lost.

Ethel knew quite well that if she were not Keith's wife her life would have lost its crowning happiness, but she would have taken up her burden bravely and made the best of it. If sorrow came to her it would not be the blank despair which threatened Rosalie.

And Keith Jocelyn knew nothing of the storm slumbering near him, so ready at act of his to burst forth. He knew that Rosalie Norton was rarely beautiful, and that in her presence he was a victim to the subtle fascination of her manner.

When she spoke to him he forgot aught else, but he never thought of Rosalie as his future wife. He never dreamed of her sitting in the gardens of Jocelyn Manor with his children in her arms. In all his visions of the time to come the fair face of Ethel Devreux figured, and yet he never spoke a word of love to Ethel.

He saw a great deal of her. All his leisure time was spent in Cadogan Street, or in escorting his mother and her charges to the various gaieties they attended; yet he never seemed to have an opportunity to talk to Ethel.

Whenever Miss Norton was present she drew him to her side. If Rosalie were in the room she always claimed him as her attendant.

"Which is it to be, Keith?" asked Sir Geoffrey Hamilton, meeting his brother-in-law in Hyde Park one morning late in June. "Do you know your wedding is the great subject of conversation just now?"

Keith smiled.

"I had no idea I was so important."

"Don't flatter yourself; you are not at all important. It is the ladies who cause the excitement, both being general favourites."

"Both?" cried Keith, fairly laughing. "You are absurd, Geoff. No one can have two wives. What made you think of it?"

"Then I return to my former question. Which is it to be? Are you a prisoner to Miss Norton's beauty, or have you surrendered yourself captive to the violet eyes of Ethel Devreux?"

"Miss Norton would not thank you for using her name in such a manner, Geoffrey. She is too proud to be lightly spoken of."

Sir Geoffrey smiled.

"I had no intention of speaking lightly of her. I only hazarded an inquiry as to her future husband."

"I believe myself," said Keith, thoughtfully, "that she lost her heart to some man in Italy whom they won't let her marry. Nothing else would account for the way in which she sands fellows to the rightabout."

"Or some man in England, eh, Keith?"

Keith Jocelyn looked puzzled. Then his friend's meaning came to him with a rush.

"Indeed, you are quite mistaken, Geoffrey. Miss Norton and I are friends, nothing more."

"Friends! Rosalie Norton is not the style of girl to be a man's friend. She would be all or nothing, I fancy."

Keith smiled.

"She will be 'all,' I daresay, to some lucky fellow, and I daresay they will be very happy. I think I never saw a girl with such a world of passion in her eyes."

"Keith?"

"What is the matter? How solemn you look."

"Because you are walking on the edge of a volcano, and won't see your danger."

"You are speaking riddles."

"Am I? Well, then I will be very plain. Your behaviour is the talk of all our set."

"What on earth have I done?"

"You divide your attentions too equally between Miss Norton and Miss Devreux. People say it is time you decided which was to be Lady Jocelyn."

Keith flushed hotly.

"Do you mean I'm a flirt, Geoffrey?"

"I don't mean anything of the kind, but really, Keith, it looks queer."

"What does?"

"Your conduct. Whenever Miss Norton is not present you are Ethel Devreux's shadow; no other man has a chance to speak to her."

"Except the Marquis of Allonby," ruefully.

"And he is her cousin. Well, directly Miss Norton appears you desert her rival, and are her devoted cavalier."

Keith looked troubled.

"It has puzzled me, Geoff. I don't mind telling you, because I know you can be trusted."

"I can, indeed, Keith."

"Well, then, Rosalie Norton has an influence over me for which I cannot account. I can no more help talking to her and paying her attentions than the needle can help flying to the magnet."

"And do you wish to help it?"

"I do, indeed. I have the highest admiration for Miss Norton; I think she is simply the most beautiful creature I ever saw, but, Geoff, on my word of honour, I never had the least idea of appropriating that beauty; never until you spoke had the idea of marrying Rosalie Norton come into my head."

"Well, I am surprised."

"It is true," went on Keith, speaking with feverish eagerness. "I can't explain it to you. If I believed in such doctrine I should say we had met before in some other state. I seem to have no power over myself when I am in the presence of Rosalie Norton."

"Then the sooner you get rid of her presence the better for you both."

"I can trust myself, Geoff. I shall never ask her to marry me."

"But you may lead her to think you mean to ask her. Keith, you are playing with edged tools."

"You seem to forget that I am not a par-

ticularly good match. Rosalie Norton is an heiress."

"An heiress who is to please herself in her choice of a husband. Lord Norton has openly stated so."

Keith shrugged his shoulders, and answered irritably, for a wonder. Usually he was remarkably good tempered.

"I do wish you'd leave me to manage my own affairs, Geoff. You need not be afraid of my relations with Miss Norton. We are simply friends. In fact, I know positively her affections are engaged elsewhere."

"That alters the case. Why couldn't you say so before? Is he a decent fellow?"

Keith was alluding to his first meeting with Rosalie at Richmond. He had long ago decided that the person for whom she had mistaken him must be the hero whose memory made her send away many good men and true, but he could not explain all this to Geoffrey, and so the friends parted with less cordiality than usual, and went their separate ways.

Little heed as he had seemed to give to Geoffrey's remonstrances they had sunk into his heart.

As he walked on a doubt would come to him that there was trouble in store for him through Rosalie Norton. The old superstition about rescuing a person from drowning came back to his mind with painful distinctness.

What harm could she do him, this beautiful, fascinating creature, who seemed to enjoy his society more than that of men far higher and nobler than he? Granted the wish, what power could she have over his fate?

He suddenly remembered that he had an engagement to lunch at the Nortons', and he bent his steps thither. He was received with the utmost cordiality, and as he shook hands with Lord Norton's beautiful grand-daughter he almost reproached himself for the doubts he had cherished of her.

After lunch he followed the ladies to the drawing-room, and Mrs. Norton, who on account of their relationship never looked on Keith as an ordinary visitor, chancing to be called away by the old baron, Rosalie and Keith were left alone.

It was by no means their first tête-à-tête, but he had never before felt so ill at ease. He, the accomplished traveller, the clever man of the world, was actually at a loss for words.

After that conversation with Sir Geoffrey Hamilton he could hardly talk to Rosalie without embarrassment. He felt within himself that if he spoke he should be sure to make some mistake.

Rosalie sat on a low chair by the window, a piece of fancy work in her hands, a happy smile on her face. She never doubted that Keith's love story was coming, that the wish of her heart would be given her, and her hero ask her to be his wife.

She wondered at his hesitation. Surely she had given him every encouragement. For his sake she had discarded suitor after suitor; she allowed him more chances than any man in town, and he was the only one among all her acquaintances who was admitted to these pleasant tête-à-têtes in her grandfather's drawing-room.

"How very silent you are," she said, at last, looking up from her work. "Is there anything the matter, Mr. Jocelyn?"

"Nothing. I was only thinking."

"Not of a pleasant subject, I am afraid. Do you know you were positively frowning?"

"I was thinking of you."

Rosalie's colour deepened.

"I ought to feel flattered, only I am sure your thoughts were sad ones. Why should I make you look so grave, Mr. Jocelyn?"

"You forget," he said, simply, "the first time we met was a very grave incident."

She half rose from her seat and looked into his face with her lovely southern eyes. Did he mean their meeting at Southvale long ago, or that scene by the banks of Father Thames, when he rescued her from a watery grave?

She longed to know which he meant, yet she dared not ask him. If he had not recognised her

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as Julie D'Arcy she must do nothing to betray the secret of the past.

"It was very grave," she said, at last; "and yet I often like to think of it."

"Do you know, Miss Norton, I felt certain we should meet again. I seemed sure of it."

"And were you glad?"

"Yes."

So far the position still remained a difficult one for Rosalie, as Keith's remarks would apply equally to either scene. She resolved to try another tack.

"I saw you pass this morning with Sir Geoffrey Hamilton. What model brothers-in-law you seem."

"You see Geof was my friend before he was Louise's husband, and so I occasionally impress upon her ladyship that I have a prior claim on him."

Rosalie smiled.

"Have they been married long?"

"Nearly five years."

He never cared to recall the date, for reasons of his own.

"Until we knew them we always fancied Sir Geoffrey was very fast. A friend of ours used to meet him long ago at some place in Southvale where people went to play cards."

"That was long ago," defending his friend.

"Geof is as steady as time now. Besides, that place was not so very terrible. I have been there myself."

The doubt was solved now. He had not recognised her. This much was sure.

"Indeed."

"Only once. I remember thinking it must be hard on a man's kith and kin when he takes to cards as a profession."

"Why?"

"Because it shuts them out from all society. They have no place in the world. In tastes and feelings they may be refined, but they are not received as equals. They can never be 'of us.'"

Ethel's words of long ago, only they sounded differently coming from him. Rosalie loved him all the more for the deep pity in his voice.

"There was a girl at Southvale," went on Keith, slowly. "I remember so well; almost a child, a weary, spiritless girl, who seemed to have no place anywhere—one too many in the world. When I came out that night I resolved I would never go again lest I should grow as hard and callous to all family ties as the unhappy man whose child she was."

Rosalie was crying.

"Forgive me," said Keith, gently. "I ought not to have saddened you. I forgot such remembrances were not the things to tell a young lady."

"Are young ladies such useless creatures they cannot sympathise with a tale of sorrow?"

"I am sure you could sympathise with anything that needed sympathy."

"I hope so."

"Do you know, Miss Norton, it is two months to-day since we first met?"

"Is it really? Did you trouble to count?"

"Yes." Then awkwardly, "I have often thought over all that happened that day, and there is a question I long to ask, only I fear you will think me impertinent."

"I could never think that."

"You will take a weight off my mind if you will tell me," a strange seriousness in his manner, "and yet I feel I have no right to ask it."

She imagined he was going to ask her for her love. He meant to put a very different question, one that had often occurred to him, namely, who was it for whom in her delirium after her escape from the water she had mistaken him?

"Ask," encouraged the beautiful heiress. "I will promise to answer you truly."

Keith was very near her chair. He fixed his dark eyes on her face and was about to speak when the door was opened and Mrs. Norton entered.

Which was most dismayed it would be hard to say. Rosalie could have punished her aunt

severely for postponing the question she longed to answer.

Keith was painfully conscious both his looks and position might be misunderstood, and poor Mrs. Norton felt sadly aware that her presence was unwelcome—in fact though she tried to behave as if she had not noticed anything the attempt was a signal failure, and Keith soon after took his leave.

CHAPTER XI.

AT DEVREUX COURT.

He hath indeed much bettered expectation.

WE left Mrs. Grey just arrived at Devreux Court, listening to the friendly gossip of Mary Jane, the housemaid. After that one involuntary shiver at the mention of Jocelyn Manor, the new housekeeper recovered her composure. After a kindly dismissal to the maid she went downstairs to inspect the grand ancestral mansion which had now for at least a time become her home.

"And his home must have been something like this," she murmured to herself, "the home he did not find me worthy to share. And Sir Claude Devreux is of his order. I wonder if the baronet will think me good enough to be here, but I forgot, I am not here as an equal."

And with a smothered sigh she turned away. And meanwhile Sir Claude shut up in his library had entirely forgotten the great event of the day. He certainly had heard an unusual stir, but then since Mrs. Johnson's abrupt departure noises had been no uncommon things in the once well-regulated household.

Buried in the latest treatise on chemistry our baronet tried hard to forget the petty vexations which had of late assailed him. When the gong rang for dinner he was fairly surprised to find that the afternoon had passed without disturbance.

Butler and cook, gardener and groom, seemed at last to have understood that their master preferred any mistakes on their part to being troubled to give orders.

Rising slowly and reluctantly, Sir Claude closed his beloved treatise, tucked it affectionately under one arm, and set out for the dining-room. Since Mrs. Johnson had gone he no longer denied himself the company of his favourites even at meal times.

A stately, handsome man was Ethel Devreux's father, even when attired in a rusty, velvet shooting-jacket, which his own servants would have deemed only fit to throw away.

Seating himself in his accustomed place, without once looking up, he commenced a lengthy grace, in spite of poor Joliffe's agonised attempts to gain his attention. Grace finished, the butler, finding his nods and signs disregarded, gave a firm but respectful tug at his master's sleeve.

"Eh, what?" said Sir Claude, suddenly waking up.

"Beg pardon, sir, but Mrs. Grey has arrived."

"Very well," said Sir Claude. "I hope they have had a room got ready for her, and shown her every attention."

"She is here, sir, if you would only look."

This last in an audible aside.

Sir Claude did look, and he found the sight a surprising one. Opposite himself, in the very seat occupied for so many years by Mrs. Johnson, was a lady as different to her as well could be imagined.

Sir Claude saw a woman in her early prime, whose plain, close-fitting black dress revealed a figure artists would have raved over. Her complexion was of the purest, creamiest white, unrelieved by the slightest possible colour, her eyes the lightest shade of hazel—some people would have called them green—and the spring sunshine fell upon her bright, auburn hair, seeming to make a halo round her head.

Sir Claude felt terribly vexed with himself. Absent-minded bookworm, and dreamy student though he was, he had all the instincts of an Eng-

lish gentleman, and he thought it a blot upon his chivalry that this young widow should have been so long in his house without receiving a welcome from himself.

Rising abruptly he walked the whole length of the long mahogany table and offered his hand with old-fashioned courtesy.

"I am more disturbed than I can say to have been so remiss," said he, gravely. "But no one told me of your arrival. Joliffe," in a voice of thunder, "what caused this neglect? Why on earth did you not apprise me of this lady's coming?"

Joliffe opened his eyes and stared. His master so seldom spoke at all that there was a charming novelty in his doing so, even if it was only to scold.

"You said you were not to be disturbed on any account, Sir Claude," said he, in a voice of aggrieved virtue.

"Not for the trumpery rubbish you servants are likely to worry me about—the arrival of a visitor is quite a different matter."

Here Mrs. Grey interposed, and by so doing gained for herself one staunch friend in the baronet's household. From that moment Joliffe was her bond-slave.

"It was my fault," she said, gently. "I did not ask to see you; indeed I wished to go to my own room. Besides, you know, Sir Claude," with a charming smile, "I am not a visitor, I am only the housekeeper."

"In any case I hope you will receive all respect from me and mine," was Sir Claude's rejoinder.

Really, for a man who had nearly given up talking altogether, our baronet showed himself a good hand at polite speeches.

"The soup is getting cold, Sir Claude," remonstrated Joliffe, and his master went meekly back to his seat.

Verily youth and fair looks command what age and worth do not always obtain. The treatise on chemistry was closed and dismissed to the sideboard, and Sir Claude found himself mentally deciding that his velvet shooting-jacket really was getting a little shabby. It was a pity he had given up dressing for dinner at his age.

The two who partook of the dainty fare were perfect strangers. The other's past was to each a sealed book, and as yet they had no common source of interest. Mrs. Grey, in spite of the servants' confidences respecting their master, had not grasped the fact that he always took his meals in silence, and she strove in vain to find a subject for conversation.

Poor thing! To her it was no easy task. Her life had been so chequered, so full of weary disappointment and bitter heartache, that she had never had occasion to learn the modern accomplishment known as small-talk. She observed at last upon the beauty of the country.

Joliffe trembled for his master's patience. He quite expected an angry reproof to follow. But Sir Claude replied with as much interest as if he spent all his leisure in studying the charms of nature instead of those of books. Joliffe could not believe his ears, he very nearly dropped the silver dish he was holding in his surprise.

The fact was Sir Claude felt real regret for his accidental want of courtesy, and talked more in ten minutes than he had done before in ten weeks. And before he was aware of it the effort disappeared, and he found himself actually enjoying Mrs. Grey's conversation.

"Did you have a pleasant journey?" he presently inquired.

"Yes," said Mrs. Grey, "and in the spring one is so glad to get into the country."

"But you will find this very dull after London," suggested her companion.

"I think not," and she looked quietly down at her black dress.

"Have you lived in London long?"

"Some time, chiefly in the suburbs," with visible hesitation. "I have not seen real English country such as this for a long time. You must be very proud of your home, Sir Claude."

"I like the old place," he said, simply. "But I am a great recluse. Books are my hobby, Mrs. Grey."

"So I have heard," thinking of Mary Jane's revelations. "But you can't read all day, Sir Claude."

"It is computed," said the baronet, gravely, his voice changing as he approached his favourite topic, "that if a child learnt to read at eight years old and read twelve hours a day till he was seventy-five he would only have perused a very small portion of the books in our language."

"Poor little boy," said Mrs. Grey, playing with her watch-chain, "how very tired he would have got."

"If I had had a son—" and he paused abruptly.

Never before had he mentioned the disappointment of his life to a stranger.

"And have you not?" asked his companion. "I beg your pardon, Sir Claude," recollecting herself, "I am very rude."

"Not at all," with an indescribable sadness in his voice. "Why should I wish to hide what the most ignorant rustic about the place could tell you? My only child is a daughter, and at my death Devreux Court, with all its broad acres, must go to a distant cousin."

Joliffe and his satellites had left them, and were doubtless retailing in the servants'-hall the marvellous change in their master. The cloth was removed, and rare glass and delicate china now stood on the bare, dark, polished table.

Sir Claude looked round and saw his treatise on chemistry—till then he had actually forgotten its existence. He thought of the long hours when he was shut up in his library—surely his companion would be very lonely.

"I am afraid you will be very dull," he said, earnestly. "You see I am much engaged in study. My daughter is generally away, and I never have any visitors."

Mrs. Grey smiled, but her smile had in it more of sadness than of mirth.

"You forget," she said, simply, "I did not come here in search of amusement. I hope I shall satisfy you, Sir Claude, and that you will let me stay."

"I am sure you will satisfy me. My only fear is that the monotony of this life will try you. You have doubtless been used to a home of your own, and pleasant society?"

She shook her head.

"The saddest years of my life, Sir Claude, were when I had a house of my own. As for society I do not care for it."

"What a wonderful woman!" thought Sir Claude. Then looking at her strangely attractive face he marvelled what chance could have brought her to be his housekeeper.

"I hope you will remember that you are perfectly free to ask any of your relations to visit you here. I should like you to feel perfectly at home."

"Thank you, Sir Claude, but I have not a relation in the world."

"A good thing for you," returned the baronet. "Relatives are a sad trouble, as I know to my cost," meditatively.

Mrs. Grey answered nothing. Perhaps she was thinking of the sister she had lost not quite two months before, and who lay buried in a peaceful rural churchyard. Suddenly the widow remembered the usages of good society, and rose at once to leave Sir Claude in the enjoyment of his wine.

It was light still, a lovely evening in early spring. She threw a thin shawl on and went into the grounds; their tranquil beauty charmed her wearied, world-worn spirit.

"Have I done wrong?" the poor, stricken soul asked herself, anxiously. "Would Marie think so if she could know? She was so good and gentle, so generous to me always; she would have given me all she had living. Dead she surely could not grudge me the shelter of her name."

"I sinned long ago," she continued, dreamily, "but I have been punished bitterly. He was punished too. I could not bear that, and so I have managed that I should suffer alone. I wonder was it very wrong?"

The little birds singing their evening melody, the soft, silvery clouds melting in the sky, heard

the question, but they could not answer it. Mrs. Grey paced up and down uneasily.

"I think I can be happy here—as happy as I could be anywhere without my husband. That old man has a sad, dreary life. I fancy perhaps I can brighten it up a little—at least I shall know that my dear one is free, that he enjoys his rightful home, and the punishment lights only on me."

Returning to the house she met Sir Claude on the terrace steps.

"I thought I should like to show you the conservatories," he said, quickly. "I do not take much interest in them, but people say that they are worth looking at."

Indeed they were. To Mrs. Grey the intense beauty of the scene made it almost like fairyland. She wandered entranced from flower to flower almost like a happy child.

"You are fond of flowers."

It was not a question but an assertion. Sir Claude, student and bookworm though he was, understood the silent rapture of her face.

"I love all flowers, but I never saw any so beautiful as these."

He picked her a fragrant white rose, and presented it with old-fashioned grace. Mrs. Grey took it as simply as it was offered, and then they went back to the house.

"Tea is in the drawing-room, ma'am," said the worthy Joliffe, meeting Mrs. Grey upon the threshold. Then to his master, "The lamps are lighted in the library, Sir Claude."

But the baronet did not retire to his sanctum; he followed Mrs. Grey to the dainty, lamplit drawing-room, and even accepted a cup of tea.

"I can't make it out," declared Joliffe, below-stairs. "There's the master sitting in the drawing-room drinking tea!"

"Law, Mr. Joliffe!"

"It's true, cook. Mrs. Grey is an uncommonly nice young lady, and perhaps Sir Claude thinks so," suggested the housemaid. "What would Miss Ethel say?"

"Miss Ethel and the master are best friends apart. If the baronet likes to have a lady to see to things instead of old Mrs. Johnson, why he's a perfect right, I say," returned Joliffe.

"And if he should marry her," put in the cook, "it wouldn't hurt Miss Ethel a bit. Everyone knows all the master can give her is a home here in his life, and that she don't seem to care for, seeing she's away eleven months out of the twelve."

Never surely had housekeeper been received with more favour by the servants over whom she came to rule.

As the days went on no one changed their opinion. Mrs. Grey seemed to have settled down at Devreux Court as though she had lived there for years. She proved an able mistress for the establishment, and was undoubtedly a popular one.

There are women who rule, and rule well, by force of mere personal influence, and that was the case with Mrs. Grey. Her word soon became law, and yet every man, woman and child about the place loved her.

Gradually there came a change in Sir Claude's habits. He was still a reserved, studious man, he would still have refused invitations (had any come) as rigorously as ever, but he ceased to grumble if anyone spoke to him. His velvet shooting-jacket was discarded, and he appeared daily at dinner in the sable garments supposed to be the evening uniform of gentlemen and waiters. He even went into the gardens sometimes, and he had actually been seen out driving.

Of course it got about, rumour is always busy, especially in the country, and one or two matrons decided that it was all "that creature's" doing, meaning Mrs. Grey, and that she was aspiring to be Lady Devreux. The vicar's wife was deputed by the neighbourhood generally to call at the Court and see how matters stood. As many of the servants there had been her husband's school-children she stood some chance of getting at the truth.

Mrs. Brown expected to find the whole establishment rampant against Mrs. Grey. To her

intense surprise one and all were in favour of the enterloper. Even when the lady gently hinted at the dark designs she suspected the young widow of entertaining they did not take fright, and Sarah Jane, who was bolder than the rest, calmly remarked she would be very glad.

"It's been a different house, ma'am, since Mrs. Grey came."

Mrs. Brown decided on interviewing the enemy herself. She sent in her card, and a message that her husband being vicar of the parish she had called, etc., etc.

Mrs. Grey received her with the same grace she always showed. The vicar's wife was surprised in spite of herself. No woman looked more innocent of scheming than this young widow. She spoke of Sir Claude with frankness, admitted that he was very kind to her, and she hoped she had roused him a little from his studious habits.

"I have never seen Miss Devreux," concluded Mrs. Grey, gently. "I hope she will not think I have taken a liberty in trying to fill the empty place her long absences cause."

Mrs. Brown was delighted with the humility of this reply.

"Ah, you don't know Miss Devreux. She is the sweetest creature imaginable, the last person in the world to take offence. Besides, her father has a rival now in her affections. It is reported that she is engaged to young Mr. Jocelyn."

Mrs. Grey's hand rested lightly on a little table where a vase of flowers stood. As the vicar's lady concluded her speech the table fell to the ground, and the vase was broken in pieces.

"How very stupid of me," cried Mrs. Grey. "I am always forgetting that this table is rickety."

And Mrs. Brown, in spite of the worldly wisdom on which she prided herself, went away and suspected nothing.

(To be Continued.)

SCIENCE.

STEAM SLEDGE FOR ARCTIC USE.—A despatch from Washington relative to the outfit of the relief steamer *Mary and Helen* states that Chief Engineer George Sewell, of the navy, now on duty at New York, has, upon official request, forwarded to the Navy Department designs for a steam sledge which is intended to be self-propelling and capable of towing a number of sledges.

LUMINOSITY OF PHOSPHORUS.—The remarkable fact was noticed by Fourcroy that phosphorus does not shine in pure oxygen at the temperature of 15 deg. C., and atmospheric pressure. M. Chappuis has lately observed that a bubble of ozone brought into a test-tube (used in this experiment) causes phosphorescence. The phenomenon persists only an instant, till all the ozone is absorbed. This experiment gives fresh proof that the phosphorescence of phosphorus is due not to vaporisation, but to combustion of the vapour. All the space filled with oxygen is luminous at first, and it is only when all the vapour of phosphorus is burnt by the ozone that the phosphorus shines in its turn. Again, M. Chappuis notes that substances, like oil of turpentine, which hinder phosphorescence, destroy ozone, or are destroyed by it. In a spherical glass vessel holding air, phosphorus, and oil of turpentine, a bubble of ozone introduced causes a momentary gleam. The ozone is destroyed in contact with the oil, but also burns part of the phosphorus vapour. Presently the gleam, produced at first only at the point of arrival of the ozone, spreads through the whole space occupied by phosphorus vapour, and the phenomenon lasts some time; at length only the phosphorus remains luminous. (These experiments were lately brought before the Paris Chemical Society.)



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CHAPTER V.

Such an act takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there.

TAKING his cue from her, Kenneth Sherwood comprehended the sweet gravity with which Violet Tremaine met him, some hours later, when he returned from a visit to the offices of the Marsala company. He made no further reference to his ill-timed declaration, deferring it to the time when, if ever, her brother should be at liberty.

The next day brought the letter from Reginald Tremaine to his firm, with the demand for ransom, and Sherwood found new cause for alarm in the attitude of these men, who had the life of his friend virtually in their hands.

An Englishman, named Benton, who was in authority at the offices, went so far as to intimate to Sherwood, quite plainly, that his interest in the affair was superfluous; and the Italian employees took their tone from him. When Miss Tremaine came, however, they were obsequious and devoted, promising all reassuring things, and protesting that there was not the slightest danger to her brother.

But Kenneth Sherwood had learned enough from young Tremaine of his suspicions of the honesty of these men to be anxious to have proofs of their good faith. He, therefore, was eager to know if they had sent telegrams to England for the necessary sums to make up any deficit for the ransom of his friend. But the closest watch upon the offices of the Palermitan marine telegraph showed him no emissary from the Marsala company sending such telegrams. His uneasiness became almost unconcealable as the first few days passed before the demand was sent; but it was sent at last. It had been delayed, however, until the news would be likely

to reach London by ordinary means and provoke inquiry; but now, of course, the necessary sum would be immediately forwarded, and he tried to be at rest.

Meantime, Violet Tremaine displayed the firmness which is so eminently characteristic of a sweet, quiet woman. She kept herself so occupied during these first days that she left little time for brooding and real discouragement.

The low fever of the poor old marquis dragged its weary length, under the antiquated ministrations of a Sicilian doctor; and Miss Tremaine and her maid had enough to do to supplement the Sister of Charity whom the young count soon installed as his father's nurse.

It happened, oddly enough, that both English consul and clergyman were away, and so no one came to disturb the enforced quiet of those sad days. Sherwood, in his torment of anxiety lest the delayed ransom should cost her brother his life, was little with Miss Tremaine, and made several journeys over to Naples, ostensibly for his own affairs, which excused his absence.

One night when the invalid had at last babbled himself to sleep with Violet's hand in his, content to think over his lost daughter, the poor girl's fortitude gave way for a little, and, in spite of herself, the tears dropped silently on those clasped hands as she thought of what her life might be without the dear brother who had been father, mother, all, to her tender years.

Suddenly a sound of steps brought Count Buccellai before her. To her surprise and horror, on seeing her tears, he fell on his knees, and snatching her hands to his lips, poured forth vows of adoration, mingled with promises to save her brother if she would listen to him.

Poor Violet, unused to this tropical heat of protestation, and in some sort outraged by such a scene beside the bed of his sick father, repulsed the young man with ill-concealed indignation. She was shocked with his bad taste and unheard-of presumption.

"The signore forgets," said she, "that the moment is ill-chosen for such words, even if the

illness of his father and the absence of my brother did not forbid."

She stood up bravely, looking into his dark, passionate face, though her own paled, and she trembled almost perceptibly.

"Oh, cold Northerner! Bella bionda, how could I be silent when I saw your tears?" the Italian burst forth. "How can I await the return of your brother when you will not say the words, the only words which can release him?"

What could he mean? Violet asked herself. And, oh, where was Kenneth Sherwood now, when she needed him most? She looked about her. The night-light flickered dimly over the features of the Sister of Charity, asleep at the bed's foot, and made the sick man's pallor ghastly. For some moments she could not speak. A nameless terror, born of her lonely position, held her fast. No one to come if she should call. But she thought of her brother.

"What can you mean, signore conte?" she asked, with feigned assurance. "How can anything I say affect my brother's release? And you, signore—what can you have to do with robbers?"

"Oh, loveliest Inglese," he whispered, hoarsely, evidently encouraged in his wild passion by her seeming calm, "I meant to wait, to be patient—believe me—but your brother will die before the ransom comes—it will be delayed until too late, unless powerful influence is exerted—"

Violet felt her blood deserting her cheeks and her heart labouring, but she struggled bravely; and even then spoke quietly, if not calmly.

"And the influence, if it is yours to exert, will surely not be lacking? Think, signore conte, of his life so dear to me, and save it if you can. My gratitude shall be yours—my friendship—"

There was a pleading tremor in her sweet voice, as her clasped hands and wet eyes besought the man before her; but he seemed only moved by her loveliness. His breath came in deep, gasping inspirations, and his eyes shone

dangerously as he leaned forward and whispered in her ear.

The tiny pink whorl blushed an outraged crimson as it conveyed the Italian's words to Violet Tremaine's pure heart. Could it be that, under the guise of love's holy name, any creature wearing man's shape would bargain with a delicate woman in distress? Buy a wife with her brother's life? And what was this boasted influence, which should be able to save Reginald in default of ransom? As she stood before him, pale and trembling, thinking these thoughts, with her hand pressed upon her struggling heart, there came to her through the open window the sound of Kenneth Sherwood's voice, and it seemed to the poor girl that help had at last arrived. How she knew not; but she felt as if she were saved from great peril by this friend's mere presence.

The Rucellai frowned ominously at this sound from below.

"If you tell the American what I have said," he whispered, hoarsely, "I shall desert your cause; and then your brother is lost. Let him beware how he crosses the path of the Rucellai."

"But he will assist; he will do all, anything for—for my brother," Violet protested.

"A word to him, and he, too, is lost," responded the count, from between his teeth. "The mafia knows how to dispose of meddling persons."

With these warning words he left the room, going out by one door as Violet's maid, sent by Sherwood, came to seek her by the other.

Violet Tremaine was so pale and fragile-looking, as he greeted her after this short absence, that Kenneth Sherwood longed to fold her in his arms and caress her like a suffering child; but he felt that he must not take advantage of her solitude, grief, and anxiety, if he could even be sure of her own willingness; and so he checked the loving words on his lips, even when she came hurrying to him, and put both her small hands confidently in his, making his heart leap with ardent hope.

"All goes well," he said, in a cheerful voice. "Why do I find you so sad and worn? I must stop here, and not let you tire yourself out with the old marchese."

"Oh, are you sure that all will be well? Are you sure that there can be no doubt about the ransom? Is there no way to provide against a possible failure?" And Violet's tears threatened to drown her sweet eyes as she held fast to Sherwood's hands and poured out her fears.

"You may rely upon everything being done that is humanly possible," pronounced Sherwood, with the slow deliberation of a vow, and a tremor in his tones that betokened the deepest feeling. More explicit he dared not be.

"Forgive me," she said. "I should have known that you would leave nothing undone; but the long night hours—the fears that I cannot avoid—oh, I cannot tell you all I dread—"

She checked herself hastily, to Sherwood's great astonishment; but he made no observation.

"What is really the mafia?" she asked, after an absent pause.

"It is a Sicilian society, or, worse, a band of brigands, which counts among its numbers some of the highest and cleverest, as well as the worst and most ignorant, blood of the island. I suppose there is no reason to doubt that princes and potentates, as well as the poorest beggars in the streets, are affiliated, and equally bound to obey the behests of its camarilla. But why should we talk of such infamous things, done in the name of liberty become licence?" he added, seeing in Violet's face a new terror, for which he could not account. "We will recover your brother, and then turn our backs upon this misgoverned island, leaving its beauties and treasures of antiquity to be developed when infantine United Italy is older, and better able to cope with and govern her disobedient children."

"If we might but escape," sighed Violet.

"But we shall escape, of course," said Sherwood, cheerfully.

"But if the ransom-money should be stolen, en route, by other brigands?"

"Then there are even other ways. Trust me, Miss Violet, your brother shall not die while I live. Will you try to believe it?"

With a deep blush she gave him her hand for answer, but at that moment I fear it did not greatly reassure her to think that he too might risk his life to save her brother. It seemed to her sacrilege to think of anyone but Reginald, and yet this stranger would be a cruel loss.

CHAPTER VI.

The miserable have no other medicine,
But only hope.

THUS followed long, weary days for Violet Tremaine, each one filled with alternate hopes and fears and brave efforts against despair; while each night brought Count Gaetano, whose visits she dared not avoid, with his threats and promises and cruel tenderness, and the Sister always slept soundly during the long hour of his visit.

Many a time in that week did Sherwood insist that Miss Tremaine should leave the old marchese. This daily duty, in these hours of cruel suspense, were together too much for her.

They seemed to wear upon and exhaust the young girl in a manner unaccountable to him. But the fear of increasing her brother's danger by resisting the young count's addresses openly brought her always to the old man's bedside at the usual hour.

"Why should you wish to marry me if I do not love you?" she asked her tormentor constantly.

"But young ladies do not know what love means until after marriage; that is for contadine," he asserted, with wide-eyed astonishment at the question. "You will adore me when we are married. I shall make you most happy, and then mine is one of the best names in Sicily, as you surely know."

"But how can you save my brother, even if you wish?"

"Leave me the task. Give me only your little hand and a vow to be mine, and I shall—I shall pay the ransom."

"How is it you can pay so large a sum at once when you were to have the American in your house for the sake of the money he could give you?" she shrewdly demanded, in a moment of sick, helpless fear and anger at his cowardly persistence.

"It is he, then, who has dared to tell you this, and who keeps you from promising that which I demand? Know then," he said, savagely, "that I will have him too stolen by the brigands if I see him again near you in the English garden as yesterday. He shall pay with his life for aspiring to one who has been chosen by the Rucellai. That I too am of the mafia you may know, but dare not tell!"

This then was the secret of his power. And she, Violet Tremaine, had been thus intimate with a thief! Not even with a brigand, but with one who concealed himself beneath title and position, while fattening on the gains of his physically braver if not more worthy comrades! Violet's heart turned sick at the thought of comparative complicity with such a wretch; but still she dared not yet rebel outright. Each day she hoped for news of the arrival of the ransom, and then she was sure she would be relieved from this horrible incubus.

Since the count's threat she became even afraid of being seen with Sherwood, lest he too should be spirited away. The papers were full of a similar abduction which had just taken place. A young Sicilian had disappeared from the principal theatre of Palermo. He had gone out between the acts, and his companions had seen no more of him. Some days later he was exchanged for a large sum of money sent to the brigands by his terrified family. Violet Tremaine dared not ask herself what it would cost her to know Sherwood captured, so she avoided him by every gentle means, seeing him rarely, and passed the long hours in hoping for news of the ransom.

As the days went by, and each effort to obtain

information at the Marsala offices was so ill-received and so ineffectual, Sherwood began to fear that Reginald Tremaine's life was to be sacrificed by those who had already endangered the young man's fortune by their dishonesty. Then came the last days of the respite, and Sherwood seemed animated by a feverish activity which even Miss Tremaine noticed.

Was he wishing to leave Sicily? She asked herself by what right he should be expected to remain longer than he originally intended. Was he anxious about the beautiful Italian girl's fate when her own brother had never once mentioned her?

Certain it was that he found many things to occupy him and keep him from Miss Tremaine's society, and the poor girl, feeling it without allowing herself to name and face the fact, added this new trouble to her already heavy burden. Sherwood, too, on his part avoided a tête-à-tête, lest he might chance, by word or look, to let his cruel anxiety about her brother appear. None the less was he sensible of a chill from Violet's consistent following of the same line of conduct.

"Is she doubting me because I have been able so far to do nothing to restore her brother?" he thought. "It is true that I make a seemingly contemptible figure, remaining supinely here at her side, and looking on at the daily paling and thinning of her sweet face; but I must not speak—no, that would be worse still."

The hot dawn and hotter sunset painted glorious colours on sky and sea, but poor Violet saw them not. The soft starlit night fell and brought no sleep to her weary eyes. Each day was so fearfully long; and yet how horrible to see their number dwindle without bringing the ransom. If only she could have the comfort of Sherwood's society, and be cheered by his confident certainty!

Here he came along the hot, empty street, just under her balcony, and her tired heart fluttered as she heard his steps.

"I am come to say good bye for my last day away. Wish me success," he said, trying to speak cheerfully, though his eyes were full of traitorous sadness, as he took Violet's small hand in his. "Only one day, or at most not more than two, and then we will both come back—our runaway and your devoted slave." And he kissed the little hand almost roughly.

"There is some fête in Naples, surely," she said, her sad eyes noting a bright blue suit and scarlet cravat, which gave Sherwood an entirely new and scarcely tasteful look.

"Only a small concession to the national love for colour," he stammered, and then hastened out of the room.

Violet wondered if everything and everyone was to change like him, and sat for long hours dreamily brooding till the afternoon waned and the dreaded time for Count Rucellai's visit approached.

She had refused to dine, and was summoning strength to go to the marquis, encouraging herself in the hope that this might be the last visit she should have from her tormentor, when a servant rushed in, breathless, and bringing terrible news.

A detachment of brigands had carried off another diligence load of travellers, and among the number the American!

Her informant believed that the raid had taken place in the outskirts of the city, and mine host of the Trinacria confirmed the news of Sherwood's capture. Her last friend gone—and possibly by her own fault!

Violet Tremaine's was no feeble character; but this came near crushing her. She was stunned, but it seemed to her she must do something, and yet what could she do for this stranger—this merest travelling acquaintance in the world's eyes?

She sat weeping and trembling, and even forgot the old marchese's hour in this trouble. What would the interview be now that the count had fulfilled his threat? And how could she permit him to touch the hand that Sherwood had last held?

She sent for Benton. He came, vowing that the ransom would still be in time, and declaring

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Miss Tremaine the American for Sherwood nothing about ransom him

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that his couriers were ready to go off with it at whatever hour it might arrive.

Miss Tremaine also commanded him to seek the American consul, and take all possible steps for Sherwood's safety. But, alas! she knew nothing about his friends, or their power to ransom him.

Benton promised all things, but added:

"If Miss Tremaine permits me, I think she is rid of a meddling impertinent, who might later have forced his acquaintance upon the family perhaps with fortune-hunting intentions."

These last insolent words sealed Miss Tremaine's lips, but in her heart she sighed:

"Oh, Regy! If you were here he would not dare—"

CHAPTER VII.

Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety.

The day but one before that named for his ransom dawned upon Reginald Tremaine after a weary, sleepless night. He lay, still bound, and gazing from the door of his cabin.

The stars had faded one by one from his sight, and now the "earliest pipe of half-awakened birds" heralded the sun at last. To-morrow he might hope to hear of his release, at least it would surely not pass without news. But then it might be brigand-fashion to put defaulting hostages to death in the morning.

To die thus, like a dog, and he not yet thirty! If he could but fight for his life and sell it dearly, as a man should! And then Gelsomine, his beautiful darling! It would not bear thinking of if he would keep from utter despair.

Suddenly there was a stir among the huts nearest the path to the windlass basket. Tremaine could hear the signals from the sentinels. Someone had arrived, and he waited in a fever of impatience.

A soft breeze blew over the sea, and as the sun came up in glory the blossoms began to droop; but soon a general stir became evident among the high-banked, white clouds, which hung low over the sea, and shut in the distance.

The basket creaked as it went down and up, down and up. But it was too far off for Tremaine to be able to distinguish its contents as they were brought to the plateau. At last he was sure of two human arrivals, and one, bound like himself, but probably also living, was left lying in his bonds, while the chief welcomed the new-comers, and read a letter they brought. Then certain packets changed hands, and Tremaine's heart leaped, thinking of his ransom. Perhaps it was come at last.

But what did he see? Someone cut the bonds of the man who lay there, and all at once he recognised Sherwood himself.

Sherwood here? And who was left to care for Violet? All at once he became aware of the fact that his tranquility of mind, where his sister was concerned, had depended on Sherwood's vicinity to and protection of her. Oh, would Sherwood never leave off gazing stupidly about him, and come near—near enough to be questioned?

There seemed no chance of it.

First he had a long conversation with Capo Leone, and he, too, wrote the usual letter, probably commanding the payment of his own ransom. Then Tremaine was witness to a leisurely breakfast, to which the young American did ample justice, not neglecting the sandwiches of figs and ham, and the mare's-milk cheese. Would he never finish and approach, that he might give news of Violet and Palermo?

Apparently not, for having satisfied his appetite he put a large white silk pocket-handkerchief over his hat in the guise of a puggeree and strolled off, not even in the direction of the sea, but climbing the nearest peak with great effort after his night's fatigue, and standing in full relief against the hot blue of the sky near the ruined tower.

Tremaine remarked that he was dressed in a startling suit of vivid blue, and wore a big scarlet necktie, and yet he could not remember in Sherwood a taste for such bizarre apparel.

That, however, was not singular when he recalled the brevity of their acquaintance. Would the donkey never cease regaling his taste for a sea view and come nearer?

At last! Sherwood took off his hat, with the small sheet by way of puggeree, and waved it over his head, as if saluting the sea. Then he came gingerly down, and reached the plateau as Tremaine was taking his coffee and black bread breakfast.

What did the fellow mean? He stuck a glass in his eye as he approached Tremaine, and discharged his face of all expression. Before that astonished young man had time to ask an explanation Capo Leone appeared. A portion of Tremaine's ransom, it now seemed, had been sent as a sort of sop to Cerberus, and it was prayed that the Capo Briganti would have patience for yet some days when the full sum would be made up out of funds telegraphed for from England.

So much difficulty, however, had the Sicilian bandit to explain this to Tremaine, who only half understood his patois, that he turned and called Sherwood to his aid.

"Tell the Signore Inglese that another week is all that I shall grant, and that his life will pay for any further delay," said the brigand, savagely. "He knows that the money will not save him if he tries to speak to the other prisoners," was added, significantly.

Sherwood lounged up to his former friend, and gaped skywards, with well-feigned stupidity, mumbled, in a low voice, in English:

"Not a word! Be wide awake for anything. Your sister is all right. Where is the other girl?"

"In the third cabin," responded Tremaine, his voice nearly suffocated with renewed hope, yet puzzled as to what it all meant.

"If anything happens, look out for her, and make for the sea."

He then began to interpret. Finally he lifted his hat and walked away, as if bored with the duty.

All day long Tremaine watched his friend, who did not approach. At dusk Sherwood again wandered aimlessly about, and chanced to come near Tremaine. He took off his hat, and bowed politely again, offering a hand-shake which left in his friend's hand a small, sharp knife, strong enough to cut his bonds.

"At moon-rise," he said, as if saluting, and went off toward his own allotted cabin.

A large detachment of brigands, headed by their renowned chief, had tramped away early in the afternoon, probably upon predatory thoughts intent, as they had knives as well as pistols in their red sashes, and their rifles gleamed over their shoulders.

Night fell. The others went to bed. Sherwood strolled down to the shore quite late and visited all the sentinels the last thing before disappearing into his cabin.

Tremaine lay looking out over the dark sea, which reflected on its tranquil bosom the myriad stars in the heavens, when the silver sickle of the sweet new moon peeped over the brow of the next hill. Almost at the same instant a rocket was seen to mount from each of a couple of yachts, becalmed in the space between the headlands, and two boats put off from each vessel, making shorewards.

The time had come now, Tremaine felt intuitively, to sever his bonds, and in a few moments there was a free man. But he lay quite still until he should see what he could do with his liberty.

One of his jailers snored outside, the other was smoking a meditative pipe within.

Suddenly there was a crash of firearms below the cliff, and in a few moments the bed of the dry water-course, which served as a roadway, was full of struggling men, upon whom the new moon threw a soft light. Oaths, blows, and pistol-shots rang out on the still air, and Tremaine's guardians, feeling sure of his bonds, ran off to have a share in the fray.

Quick as thought Tremaine dashed into the next cabin but one, and shoving the resisting women out of his path, found the lovely Italian weeping on her couch.

With a tender cry she ran to his protecting arms, and they fled together across the plateau and down the steep water-way into the middle of the knot of struggling men there. The brigands were fighting bravely, but the surprise had caught many without arms, and the besieging party, being double the number of their adversaries, the victory was soon decided. Meanwhile Tremaine had fled to the shore, and lifted Gelsomine into one of the boats.

Presently, down the hill came the victorious party, and assembled on the shore to re-embark.

"My brave fellows, what is the damage?" called out Sherwood.

"A broken head or two, and certain flesh wounds—I think that is all," responded someone.

"And where is Tremaine?"

"Here am I," he answered, exultant. "Has anyone a boat-cloak?"

Someone counted up the numbers. None was missing, so a speedy embarkation was effected, and soon all were on board the two yachts.

The Italian girl was warmly welcomed by Sherwood, who told her of her father's illness, though able to promise his speedy recovery with her help.

"Where in the world did you find all these jolly tars?" asked Tremaine, never able to leave off shaking them by the hand.

"Part of them are English, from a ship in port at Palermo, and part recruits from an American merchantman at Naples. We were only about forty, and we trounced those Italian beggars finely."

"I was to be captured on purpose," continued Sherwood, "so as to signal to the yachts the exact spot where you were to be found; then at the first peep of the new moon the blue-jackets were to come ashore and swarm up the road. I think we cooked their goose completely. The sentinels are still asleep from the effects of my drugged cigars."

"And the ransom?"

"That's the deuce of it, you see. There's likely to be foul play at your place. I fear your managers are hand-and-glove with these beggars," said Sherwood. "I had no end of trouble just to see your letter, although your people knew that Miss Tremaine trusted me. When they showed it on her demand I saw your phonetic message, with the description of the coast and tower. How did you know anyone understood the signs?"

"I didn't know; but I hoped it. You Americans dabble in all sorts of knowledge."

"Luckily, I should say, for no one at your place noticed the crabbed characters."

"Does Violet know of your expedition?" asked Tremaine.

"Not a word. How could I tell how it would succeed? And she needed no new anxiety. She thinks me in Naples about your ransom."

Sherwood was courteous to the young Italian girl, but asked his friend no questions; indeed, question and answer were scarcely needed, so complete was Tremaine's devotion.

The night breeze soon wafted the two out to sea, but, alas! the morning found them still within a good day's sail distant from Palermo, and in a dead calm.

It is to be doubted if Reginald Tremaine would have grumbled, however, if the voyage had been longer, but his accounts of Gaetano del Rucellai's complicity with the brigands lengthened Sherwood's face, and wrinkled his brow, though he said nothing.

To what end should he tell her brother that Violet Tremaine was nearly alone in the villain's society in their absence?

Patience! A stiff breeze would soon bring them into the midst of the matter.

If only this pink of Sicilian birth and breeding should not spirit her also away before a favouring breeze could bring them to her assistance!

CHAPTER VIII.

Discomfort guides my tongue
And bids me speak of nothing but despair.

THE long, sultry day draws to a close, and with the approach of evening the sea, which had all day shone like a furnace of melted steel, took on iridescent tints, softening into purple in the shadow of the hills.

The "African wind," which had blown steadily for a week, its hot breath taking life from the air and strength from the tense nerves, at last died away, and the beautiful city, on fire from the glowing water's edge to its loftiest glittering spire with the sunset's glory, began to fade into a series of white silhouettes, traced upon the violet background of the evening sky.

The streets so lately deserted now become peopled again. Men and women sat propped against the lintels, and tiny babies without a scrap of clothing lay on the stones in the narrow streets quite silent, their great black eyes astonished to see the stars come one by one out of the vaporose film which clouds the sky, donkeys and horses turning carefully out of their path without guidance to avoid walking on the innocent creatures.

The street Arab, the same genus, with trifling variations in all known countries, having slept away the afternoon oppression comes out in great force and of both sexes, and as soon as the dusk is really decided set about the successful persecution of the Palermitan noblesse which has begun to fill the wide streets, the Villa Giulia, and the English gardens.

It is too late in the season for forestieri, but many a kind glance is bent upon the shadowy form of the only representative of that class, solitary in the high hotel balcony, the povera Signora Inglese, whose brother is with the camorra, and who sits looking hopelessly out into the night.

Her sweet, fresh cheeks are now pale enough, and her eyes have a wildness quite foreign to their usual gentle expression as she awaits the nightly summons to the bedside of the Marchese del Rucellai—the poor old man, who calls her by the name of his lost daughter, and is happy in her visit.

That horrible visit which will begin in peace and the benison of the gentle old man, and end—how?

The last interview had been stormy enough on the lover's part, and Violet had feared that she would be obliged to call for help. And yet how could she dare him to do his worst with Reginald—with both those dear lives, perhaps, in his unscrupulous hands?

A message came from the old marquis, and still she lingered sick at heart with dread of what must follow.

A second summons. Why should she distress the sick man? At least this one kindness remained to do, and she rose and went slowly down the long corridor.

After a few loving words the marquis began to be drowsy, and under the magnetism of her touch he soon murmured his accustomed blessing and dropped asleep.

Sister Hieronyma trotted softly about the chamber for a while, but with the last bell-notes of the angelus she too sought her accustomed easy-chair, and soon the sound of her murmured orisons ceased, to be followed by a faint noise as of a distant and labouring steam engine—the gentle snore of her evening nap.

The silence became oppressive. More than once poor Violet started up to take refuge in her own rooms. But if the Rucellai should seek her there with no one but the helpless and uncomprehending English servant for protection?

At least here beside his father's sick bed there could be no real personal danger, and she might be able still to temporise.

Steps! The count was coming as usual to make his daily visit to his old father—at least this was his ostensible errand.

The door had opened softly, and in a moment he is before her, his usually dark visage blanched to a yellow pallor by strong emotion,

and his eyes shining covetously. He strides straight toward Violet, and seizing her hand kissed its trembling fingers passionately.

She starts to her feet, but he holds her hand fast, with a warning gesture toward his sleeping father, the exulting smile on his blanched face filling her with new speechless terror.

"Did I not tell you that I only could save your brother?" he whispered. "What would you do now that the ransom comes not if I could not grant you his life—I whom you love not? And that accursed American—call him now to your rescue."

Even then with death in her heart her brave soul would not yield. She threw off his detaining hand, and facing him courageously, said:

"In my country a brave man would scorn to frighten a woman, and she unprotected. Stand there, Count Rucellai, and tell me what you mean. There are yet twenty-four hours in which I hope for my brother's ransom. Even Sicilian brigands," and here she looked at him scornfully from head to heel, "keep their pledged word."

"Brava signorina!" he sneered, though he kept his distance. "And what if I tell her that there will be no time to send the money to the mountains now, though it should arrive to-morrow, as it doubtless will do. To-morrow, at the hour of twenty-three, when the sun sets, her brother will die—unless—unless she gives herself to me so soon—so soon that I can send a mounted courier with orders to ride his horses to death that he may be in time."

He saw her face change as the cruel truth came home to her. He saw and exulted in the hunted, despairing look which came over it as her shaking hands held her temples fast, and her form swayed to and fro.

One wild glance about the quiet chamber and then she turned and fled down the corridor to her own rooms, perhaps only to escape him, or with some vague idea of help in the presence of anyone else.

The door of her salon was wide open and the maid not there, and as if this trifle were the added straw to her terrible burden she fell fainting to the floor.

CHAPTER IX.

All days of glory, joy, and happiness.

THE count, who had followed her lifted her insensible body to a sofa. Then kneeling beside her he devoured her hands with eager kisses.

As he was about to touch her pure, defenceless lips with his cowardly ones a sound of hurried steps in the corridor arrested him, and while his excited brain strove to define the meaning of the interruption someone made a leap from the door behind him, and seizing him by his long hair dragged him backward across the room.

He lay there prone amidst furious English faces, a man's foot on his chest, whose pressure warned him to lie still.

What was this? The young Englishman kneeling in the same place by his sister, and kissing her in a very un-English fashion, while Gelsomine, the daughter of the proud Rucellai, knelt in her turn to his own victor pleading with tears for his release!

A few moments more and Sherwood grimly permitted him to rise. Then he cleared the room of all but the persons immediately concerned. As he was about to close the door Count Rucellai, who had by this time recalled himself, made a motion to pass out, ordering his sister to follow him.

"Scuse, signore mio," said Sherwood, "but my friend there will have something to say to you as soon as his sister is restored to consciousness, and so you will pardon me for detaining you."

With the lovely Gelsomine's assistance Tremaine had soon brought back life and colour to his sister's face, but the sudden joy of his presence was too much for the poor girl's sorely

tried strength; she fainted a second time, and then it was all to do over again.

It was not until Sherwood himself carried her to an arm-chair on the wide balcony that she could really believe she was not dreaming.

Leaving her with her hand in the contessina's—the two sweet girls already sure of loving each other—to hear and recount all the events of these past terrible days, and the good news of the approaching convalescence of the old marchese, the two gentlemen returned to the baffled Sicilian within.

He seemed to feel the shame and dishonour of his conduct as a man and a gentleman very little.

With him, in spite of his long lineage, the rank was "but the guinea stamp." At heart he was utterly selfish, and as soon as he heard of Tremaine's proposal for his sister's hand he took heart of grace and began to bargain like an old fishwoman for the retention of her small dowry by her family.

Tremaine wished to reject all idea of receiving anything with his wife, but Sherwood made him promise to do no such thing under the circumstances.

It would be time enough to be generous, he said, when the marquis should be party to the bargain.

The American was shrewd, and saw that young Rucellai would be glad to be rid of the future care of his sister on any terms now that her escape from the brigands with the two young forestieri would render her somewhat ineligible for any Italian marriage.

Meanwhile the young men were obliged to conceal their indignation at the man's unscrupulous pursuit of poor Violet.

They did this for his sister's sake, and Miss Tremaine herself never told the full history of those terrible days. What would be the use since Rucellai was soon to be her brother-in-law?

The old marquis seemed quite unaware of the substitution of his own daughter for Violet when she made the usual twilight visit, which the physician had insisted she should await lest any shock of unnecessary premature information should retard her father's cure.

"You are getting well, darling father," she whispered, as she held herself resolutely quiet, and even restrained kisses as well as tears in this dear moment of reunion lest he should suspect her recent peril.

"Sì, bimbita mia. I am getting well and strong again, thanks to thy dear care, but how hast thou escaped from the brigands? No one has told me because I was so ill. Tell me, darling."

"Thou knowest that the American in our house had a friend—an Inglese—taken when I was? Well, carino, he has saved me—at least—the two have—"

"God and the Virgin bless and make them happy!" pronounced the good old man, fervently. "When am I to see them? Have I been long ill, my beautiful one?"

"A weary time, my soul!" sighed Gelsomine, holding him close, "but thou art now cured. Could I tell thee how happy I am? First, that thou art better, and then—then, that the Inglese loves me—loves thy little one, and that she too loves him?"

She hid her face on the old marchese's breast, but her pink ears showed her blushes.

"Is it so then? And does he know of thy small portion?" eagerly demanded the father.

"But he is of the Wodehouses, who are so rich, and will be content with ever so little because he loves me, babbo—loves your little Gelsomine," she asserted, with many kisses.

The old man could well believe in any folly for her sake when he lifted the happy face from its concealment.

It was not so easy to dispose of Sherwood's case. When it became known in England to potential and even titled relatives that an American, and one believed to have little fortune, sought the wealthy Miss Tremaine in marriage, there was much fluttering of aristocratic wings. But when Tremaine arrived in England they found it expedient to assume another tone.

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"Which one among you would have taken all the money he could command, and without hope of his own ransom thrown himself into the brigands' power to save me for my sister whom he loved? And he did this too at the probable cost of his own life."

"But, Regy, dear, a young man, whom no one knows," feebly urged one.

"I will present you all with pleasure," he said, "and it will be the greatest honour of your lives to know him."

No one, therefore, was able to prevent the marriage. But it was astonishing what an ameliorating effect it had upon the minds of the relations when Kenneth Sherwood was found to possess a respectable share of this world's goods.

The old marchese spends his summers in England and his winters in his beautiful Palermitan home, which his daughter is never tired of embellishing.

One beautiful April evening as the usual skirmishing is going on between certain blonde and brown babies and their nurses in the loggia on the top of the Rucellai palace about that vexed question of going to bed we may listen to the conversation of the four persons who lean on the parapet and look out over the purple sea.

Stromboli is throwing his fiery rockets into the afterglow, and a fleet of red-sailed fishing boats is coming into port while the long, wavy line of mountains is fast fading into indistinctness, and cottage lights begin to spangle the shadows.

"I don't know that I really ever did propose," says Tremaine, with a meditative air, "now that I think of it."

The beautiful woman at his elbow first turns on him big, soft, reproachful eyes, but her coral lips part in a merry laugh as she shakes her hand at him.

"And I," says Sherwood, "I only offered a helping hand to Miss Tremaine, and she immediately clasped me about the neck."

"After the manner of mermaids," explained Violet Sherwood, tranquilly. "As we were at the bottom of the sea there was nothing else to do."

"God bless my husband," is Violet's characteristic answer.

"My Englishman loves his dowerless wife?" coaxes the stately Palermitan.

"Goose!" is the perfectly satisfactory answer.

[THE END.]

CURE FOR SMALL POX.—A physician writes to a Liverpool paper in these terms:—"I am willing to risk my reputation as a public man, if the worst case of smallpox cannot be cured in three days simply by cream of tartar. This is a never-failing remedy: One ounce of cream of tartar, dissolved in one pint of boiling water, to be taken when cold. Dose: two tablespoonfuls every two hours. It is also a preventive; dose, as before, three times a day."

AFTER sentencing to terms of imprisonment two of three young women charged at Liverpool with stealing a purse from a young lady named Elizabeth Wright, the Recorder, addressing the prosecutrix, said he had often told young women that he would not allow them their coats if robbed in the way she was. He did not like to disallow her coats, but he would advise her to have her back pockets sewn up.

The race between Robert the Devil and Bend Or was the fastest mile and a half ever run, being accomplished in 2 min. 39½ sec.

The first book ever printed in England, "The Game of Chess," was bought in Holland in 1474 for about two groschen, and was finally sold for £170.

CHARLES LAMB described the London police as "bound in blue cloth, lettered." The description was moderately accurate. It is about to be made absolutely so. Hitherto the helmets worn by the force were black in colour and uncompromising in texture. The city authorities have yielded to æsthetic influences, and it is

determined that the new helmets shall be blue instead of black. A policeman's dress certainly makes but small concessions to the claims of either beauty or fitness, but now at least it is uniform. A more important innovation is being introduced. A new weapon is to be added to a constable's equipment, and already measures are being taken to enable him to use it. The new weapon is the revolver, and every day a squad of men are picked out and regularly drilled in target practice. The "Navy Regulation" is the kind of revolver used.

It is calculated that this year California will produce from 40,000,000 to 50,000,000 bushels of wheat.

The ransom paid for Mr. Suter to the Greek brigands, £15,000, was, it is said, just Mr. Suter's weight in gold.

A SPIDER'S web affords an excellent barometer. An old sportsman claims that one preserved in his house has proved almost invariably correct. When rain and wind are expected the spider shortens the thread which suspends the web. When reefs are let out fine weather may be certain; but if the spider remains inert, rain will probably follow within a short time.

LINK BY LINK.

BY

A POPULAR AUTHOR.

CHAPTER XXVII.

There is no joy in life;
There is no beauty in the long dark days;
Existence is but weariness or strife,
Or fruitless longing.

DREARILY, drearily falls the rain, as though the windows of heaven were again opened and a second Deluge were at hand. May Pole-Gell, flattening her little nose against the wide, deep window of The Rectory drawing-room, until it shows (the nose, not the window) like a lump of white putty in its unshapeliness, wonders now it is that the weather has such power to influence one's spirits.

For quite three weeks she has felt as though all the sunshine had gone out of her life.

The continuous fine weather has given place to continuous rain. The green lawn is like a wet sponge; the long, narrow flower-bed which borders it on three sides is shorn of half its brilliancy of colouring. The sky, so far as she can see, is a uniform expanse of sullen grey, just as it was when she awoke this morning (with the feeling strong upon her that existence was rather a bore than otherwise) and went to the casement to see what the night had brought forth.

"Another four-and-twenty hours' imprisonment; it is too bad, a great deal too bad," complained the rector's daughter, with petulant disapproval of the mysterious dispensations of a providence which would persist in refusing the grateful sunshine, and in sending the unwelcome shower.

It is a very discontented face which contemplates sullen sky and sodden earth. Its owner has begun to hate the drip, drip, drip of the big drops from the eaves, and to marvel that she ever found a soothing charm in the fountain's murmuring.

"One could not be worse used if this were a tropical country, and we were in the middle of the rainy season, whilst in that case we should arrange our amusements accordingly," grumbles Miss Pole-Gell.

Then she remembers that there have been fine days, four or five of them, perhaps, all told, during these three weeks in which she has felt as though all the sunshine had gone out of her life. And her mood upon those few fine days was not more satisfactory than upon the many wet ones.

"I verily believe that I am getting blasée, ennuyée, used up, at twenty years of age," concludes May Pole-Gell, as she stifles a yawn.

Then she sets herself, for want of livelier occupation, to review the brief existence which she is beginning to find empty and valid. It was never so before, although the ancient barometer in the porch pointed sometimes for weeks at a stretch to "much rain." What has made the difference?

Her history, like that of England, seems to arrange itself in distinct periods, each terminated by some notable event. One a period of trundling hoops, wearing short frocks, keeping rabbits and white mice, and repeating lessons and prayers to a gentle, soft-voiced lady who lay all day long (without ever looking bored) upon a broad couch.

That era ended when the housekeeper, crying (so May thought at the time) like a woman who had been very naughty and was correspondingly sorry, led the little girl into a dull, silent chamber in which mamma was sleeping so soundly that a kiss failed to awake her, and with lips ice-cold.

One a period of governesses, piano-playing, of paternal tuition, of growing responsibility, of awakening ambition, of much day-dreaming. That era ended with a sprained ankle, and the advent of Colin Cathcart.

One a period of unknown emotions, self-accusation, contrition, compassion, growing interest; of flowers and sunshine and sweet breezes; of intense vitality and delicious content. That era ended with a broken, restless night three weeks ago, when Mr. Cathcart and the mercury suffered, each about the same hour, a severe fall, from which neither has yet recovered.

Is it the weather which is depressing, or is it the gentleman's illness?

With heightened colour, although no one is there to note it, May asks herself that question, and decides that it cannot be the latter, because Mr. Cathcart is now on the high road to convalescence.

It was natural, she thinks, that immediately after the accident her spirits should be lower than usual. She would indeed have been a heartless little wretch if she could have taken delight as usual in this duty and in that amusement, knowing all the while that her friend lay at the point of death. But since he is mending rapidly there is no further cause for anxiety. Why has the sunshine gone out of her life?

It must be because of this horrid weather. If the day were to clear now how many more resources she would have. She might visit her poor, or go for a drive in the repaired basket-carriage, or take a long ramble along the brook-side. There are a hundred pleasant things to be done out of doors when it is quite fine.

A miracle! As though in answer to her thought, a great bank of black cloud rolls away, showing the blue beyond. The rain ceases. Within five minutes by the clock, a dull and gloomy world is transformed to a smiling one, yet Miss Pole-Gell does not smile in concert. In fact, she seems disposed, in sheer contrariness, to quarrel with Nature for taking her at her word.

"I cannot ramble about in damp grass, I hate driving without an object, and I am disgusted with poor folks' whining hypocrisy," cries this contradictory young woman. "Oh, dear, oh, dear, what a discontented little wretch I am growing. Shall I run down to Mrs. Gwynne and ask her to give me afternoon tea? How I used to enjoy going there before that odious Miss Wiseman—"

And with that Miss Pole-Gell runs out of the room, not caring to pursue her investigations further. But as she dons hat and wrapper before the mirror the odious Miss Wiseman appears to stand beside it, wearing upon her regular features a smile of placid superiority and covert sarcasm.

Mrs. Gwynne is at home, for she appears on the doorstep to welcome her visitor.

"My dear May," she cries, "how glad I am to see you. Laura Wiseman was saying this morning what a stranger you have become."

Miss Pole-Gell makes a wry face, wondering within herself what that simple speech, spoken by the fair Laura, would be made to imply.

"And now it is too wet for croquet, I am afraid," says the doctor's wife, dubiously, reverting to her fixed idea.

"Much too wet."

"Unless I lend you a pair of goloshes," says Mrs. Gwynne, with sudden animation.

"They would be too small for me," answers May, with sly mendacity.

"Nonsense, child," says her friend, with smiling detection of the jest. "But we should have to play two balls each, I think. The doctor is on his rounds, and I do not expect Laura would leave her patient. That girl is a born nurse. The way in which she has waited upon Mr. Cathcart is beyond all praise. I consider that, under providence, he owes his life to her care."

"It is very good of her," comments May, humbly.

A great lump rising in her throat prevents her from saying more. Somehow, try as she will, Miss Pole-Gell cannot feel so grateful as she ought to the nurse who has saved Colin Cathcart's life.

"It was a worse business than we thought at first. The strictest seclusion, perfect quiet, the most devoted attention, were imperatively necessary. Well, my dear, Laura turned me out of the sick-room, and hardly allowed me to re-enter it. Let me see, have you spoken to Mr. Cathcart since the accident?"

"No," replies May, softly.

"No, I remember, Laura would not permit it. No wonder he got better without the relapse Doctor Gwynne feared. Always Laura's calm face for his poor eyes to rest on when he waked, always her gentle hands to smooth his pillow and minister to his wants, always her placid voice to soothe and comfort him. Her profession will indeed lose an ornament when—"

"When what?"

"When she marries."

"Is she engaged?"

"Not yet, dear, but I fancy she will be before this visit expires. Can you keep a secret?"

"I think so, since there is nobody to whom I should feel impelled to impart it."

Then Mrs. Gwynne whispers for half a minute in May's ear with a great affectation of mystery, and the girl looks straight before her into the wet foliage of the huge beech tree, whilst her delicate features grow white as with sudden pain.

"Would you like to see him—to see them together?" says the doctor's wife.

"I do not care. It is a matter of indifference to me. I am not interested in their concerns."

"For shame! how cruel of you!" cries Mrs. Gwynne, reproachfully. "I thought you and Colin were such friends."

"Yes, we are friends. Of course I always like to see him, if he is strong enough to receive a visitor."

"We will take up his tea unexpectedly. Laura is such a martinet she might refuse to let you in if she knew."

So the kind-hearted little woman bustles about to prepare a tempting tray for the invalid, and May stares blankly out of window.

If the whispered communication be correct, that the intimacy of the sick-room is likely to develop into the closer intimacy of matrimony, what right has Miss Pole-Gell to feel aggrieved?

It will be merely a reversal of her own programme. Starting with the familiar idea that for her marriage must mean promotion, May has never admitted that such an alliance will rob her friendship with Mr. Cathcart of its old sweetness, or that he will like her less in consequence of it.

And if he think proper to take to his bosom a lady nurse from a London hospital why should she complain? Will not her friend be as much her friend as he was before?

"Circumstances alter cases," decides the girl. "If it had been anyone but that odious woman I might have felt differently. Laura Wiseman's husband and I will be distant acquaintances only. We are only distant acquaintances now

if he has learned to set her love before my affectionate esteem."

The tray is ready—a large one, laden with such toothsome dainties as may woo an invalid's reluctant appetite.

The doctor's wife, who has a knack of doing with her might that which her hand finds to perform, picks up the tray, calling upon May to precede her and to open the nursery door.

May knows the room well. It has always been called the nursery, although it never resounded with young children's merry voices. It is on the second story. The girl's feet are as heavy as her heart as she goes up the carpeted stairs.

"Open the door and go straight in," commands Mrs. Gwynne.

An instant of hesitation, then Miss Pole-Gell obeys. Her pale cheeks grow yet more pale as she notes the disposition of the occupants.

Colin Cathcart lies at full length upon a sofa by the window. Laura Wiseman, bending above him until her lips almost touch his crisp, curly hair, is altering the position of the cushions which support his head, literally embracing him during the process, as with one arm placed beneath his shoulders she half lifts their weight.

Although the day is so close and warm a small fire burns in the distant grate, and the invalid's clothes hang about his wasted frame in a way which speaks eloquently of the severity of his illness.

"It is kind of you to visit the sick," he says, as his long, white hand, so different from the strong, brown palm she remembers, closes upon her fingers.

"An unexpected pleasure," adds Miss Wiseman, quietly, and May wonders whether those placid tones convey sarcasm, reproof, or remonstrance.

"We shall not stay long," explains Mrs. Gwynne, apologetically. "I thought you would be glad to say 'How do you do?' to Miss Pole-Gell."

"I am glad," answers Colin.

His voice is only a murmur, and it is evident that he cannot talk much. But his eyes say a great deal, and May feels comforted until Laura Wiseman approaches with a cup of tea, and the look is transferred to her, May thinks, without any diminution of meaning.

"Now you must go away, both of you," says Laura, with calm decision, when May and Mrs. Gwynne have remained about a quarter of an hour.

"Oh, not yet, please," cries the latter, pleadingly.

"I have found out that there is no appeal against the decrees of this female autocrat," comments Colin, with a faint smile.

"I want to say one thing," says May, rapidly, as for the second time her hand lies in his. "The very day of the accident I had a short interview with Miss Wrexall, who promised to give the information you require if you apply in person."

"You are very good to me," answers Colin, gratefully, and again the girl feels a thrill of pleasure, instantly suppressed by his next words.

"It is a daily marvel to me that all the world is so kind," and whilst his tongue says "all the world" his eyes single out the lady nurse, and give to the vague phrase special and pointed application.

"Supplanted! Supplanted! Supplanted!" moans Miss Pole-Gell, on her way home, and the little head which has carried itself so proudly throughout the visit, sinks low in cruel dejection. "I had but one friend, and in his regard Laura Wiseman has supplanted me."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Did I not warn thee? Thou would'st raise the veil
And drag misshapen monsters to the light.

"COLIN, my dear boy, you look fagged to death, even with this short tramp," says Mr.

Prometheus Hornblower, with kindly solicitude, as he and Colin come within sight of the Witch's Cottage, and the young man begins to lean more heavily upon his companion's arm.

"I am very weak still," murmurs Colin, feebly.

"Sit down on this stump and rest awhile. By Jove! I don't wonder that you recover slowly when I think of your awful fall. That scalp wound would have settled ninety-nine men out of a hundred. I should never have forgiven myself, lad, if it had settled you."

"The Braxton, Duffelpool, Hollowbridge and Astonburne Direct Railway goes on just as well without me," answers Colin, with a smile.

"I should have wished it had never been thought of!" cries the chairman, energetically. Then, relapsing into complacency: "Ay, it goes on well. The bridge is finished, and we are halfway across Sir Marmaduke's land by this time."

"Upon the line of the original survey?"

"Yes, the old boy behaved like a brick the moment he heard of the accident. He sent for me—did anybody tell you?"

"No."

"He sent for me, and I found him ill in bed, deserted by my lady and that young top of a son, who were off pleasing to Scarborough. He was swearing like a trooper at his valet, and I thought I was in for something sweet. By-the-bye, it was the valet wrote that last letter to you at her ladyship's dictation. The baronet knew nothing about it, and quite chuckled over the ducking you gave Master Chandos. You may fish the brook up and down to your heart's content when you get well enough, Colin."

"Well, did Sir Marmaduke swear at you, Mr. Hornblower?"

"Not he," laughs the self-made man, with importance. "I tell you what, lad, there's a certain personage who isn't half as black as he is painted. Whatever his faults, and a vile temper is one of them, he is every inch a gentleman, that he is."

"The personage, or the baronet?" inquires Colin, stolidly.

"The baronet, of course. Said he withdrew all opposition to the proposed course, and I could run it through his garden and conservatories if I liked. Said—with tears in his old bloodshot eyes, by Jove—that he would never have lifted a finger against us if he could have dreamed a life like yours would be sacrificed in consequence. You were very bad just then, Colin."

"He has sent me grapes and flowers and all sorts of things ever since. I am greatly obliged to him."

"Ay, the old boy came out a brick. Wouldn't hear of any alteration in our plans. When I found what a trump he was I was willing to stretch a point, but he wouldn't consent. Said he had only opposed us for a whim, a prejudice, and your tumble down the old mine had knocked it out of him. Well, lad, are you rested? Shall we jog on?"

Then Colin rises from the log on which he has been sitting and recommences, with the aid of his stout stick and his companion's arm, that journey to the Witch's Cottage, which he trusts may make clear the mystery of his parentage and of his mother's fate.

"You may come back to help me home in half an hour, when the witch has told my fortune," he says, with a poor attempt at playfulness, as they reach the gate.

"Witch, indeed!" grumbles Mr. Hornblower, angrily. "I should like to hand the dirty old hag over to the sanitary authorities to be pumped upon for half an hour. Look at her garden! look at her den—a frowsy, filthy—"

"Hush, man! Your voice is like a trumpet, she will hear what you say!" cries Colin, warningly. "Go away now, and come back for me in half an hour."

So the self-made man turns aside, grumbling still, and Colin walks with slow steps up the neglected garden and taps at the cottage door. Almost to his surprise it is opened at once by its owner; very much to his surprise she bids him enter.

"You may sit there," she says, pointing to the faded satin couch, and Colin is unsuspectingly grateful for the concession to his feebleness, nor notes that the arrangement is one by which Miss Wrxall's dirt-encrusted features remain in shadow, whilst such light as can struggle through the cobwebbed, diamond-shaped window-panes falls upon his own face.

"I have come—" he begins.

"The rector's daughter, who styles herself your friend, has told me why you have come, and has extorted from me a promise to give you certain information," interrupts the witch. "I warn you, Mr. Cathcart, that the information will not be pleasant for you to hear, and if you are wise you will go back as you came, in blissful ignorance."

"I would rather know the truth," says Colin, trying to nerve himself to bear evil tidings.

"Very well," replies Miss Wrxall, sharply. "Put your questions; let them be short, and as much to the point as possible, remembering that to a person of my habits your presence here is an intrusion, of which I am impatient to be rid."

"Who was Selina Harvey?"

"My apprentice, before I retired from the dreammaking business."

"Had she a lover?"

"Many."

"Miss Wrxall," cries the young man, appealingly, "you have heard from Miss Pole-Gell what it is I desire to elucidate. Will you not be kind enough to volunteer, unquestioned, all the information you can give?"

"If I were kind," answers the witch, gloomily, "I should tell you nothing—that would be true kindness, believe me."

"Then be as unkind as you can, and tell me all," implores Colin, trembling.

"Selina Harvey, as I knew her," says the witch, "was a good girl, pure and modest, simple and unsuspicious. Her manners and appearance were somewhat above her station, and she was much sought after by the young men of this village. Her most devoted lover, however, was a miner, named Simeon Blunt, who made her to my knowledge four distinct proposals of marriage."

"Which she rejected?"

"Yes, but accepted the fifth."

"On what ground?" asks Colin, wonderingly.

"I will tell you. One evening as I was taking a walk I chanced to strike out a path for myself, from one point to another, and it led me within twenty yards of a plantation of young fir-trees. In the plantation, talking so earnestly they did not see me, were Selina Harvey and a gentleman. His arm was around her waist, and I saw him bend and kiss her. On her return I taxed her angrily with this imprudent flirtation, pointing out in unmistakable language the danger of it. She heard me patiently and tearfully, but refused to admit or deny anything. She would tell me nothing, not even this new lover's name, and I became most suspicious and uneasy, particularly as she made a point of going out every evening when the day's work was done, rendering no account of her movements. This state of things lasted for some weeks. From being very good friends we had become almost enemies, and all because of her uncommunicativeness. She was evidently uneasy and unhappy, and I was very anxious about her. One morning she disappeared, and Sim Blunt the miner also. The next day I received a letter which informed me that they were married."

"Have you the letter still?"

"Not I," says Miss Wrxall. "I flung it into the fire in disgust at myself for having been so easily and causelessly worried by an ungrateful girl. You have heard all you need to know, Mr. Cathcart. Selina Harvey became the lawful wife of Simeon Blunt, and the child born to her after that marriage would be legitimate."

"But the lover—the young gentleman—"

The old woman looks at him earnestly, with something like compassion in her evil countenance.

"Why pursue your inquiries further?" she asks. "Can you not be content—"

"I will know the worst," answers Colin, doggedly.

"To your own sorrow," says the witch. "Well, it was quite a year later that somebody tapped at my door one evening. When I opened it there stood Selina Harvey, or, rather, Mrs. Blunt. By the look upon her face I knew no happy errand had brought her there. She asked me to give her a night's lodging, and before the morning light she had told me the whole truth."

"That is what I desire to learn—the whole truth," repeats Colin, firmly.

"The gentleman lover was a villain. He led her on with specious excuses and promises until he had won all a trustful girl could give. Then, when she was wild with misery and shame, he persuaded her, for her good name's sake, to marry her old lover, who was an ignorant, credulous, unsuspicious fool. The gentleman lent him a hundred pounds on condition he should immediately emigrate and should send for his wife so soon as he had made a home for her. Meanwhile, the instant the ship sailed the new-married wife and the gentleman went into lodgings as Mr. and Mrs. Blunt."

"It is all clear now," cries Colin, sorrowfully.

"What was the villain's name?"

"She would not tell me. She was faithful to him even then when he was trying to cast her off. She had come back to implore him to reconsider that determination, and when she went away next morning she was hopeful of success. I never saw her, I never heard of her again."

"Did he live in this neighbourhood?"

"I think not, because when she first met him he was on a visit to an uncle. I do not know the uncle's name."

"Have you anything more to tell me?" asks the young man, faintly.

A longing to rise and creep away is upon him, that longing for solitude which impels the stricken deer to seek covert.

"I do not think there is anything to add," says Miss Wrxall, meditatively. "I have told you all I know."

"I thank you," answers Colin, simply; and with that he does rise and drags his feeble limbs to the door. "I thank you," he repeats; and lifts his hat mechanically.

Down the neglected garden-walk, the nettles and the reeds on either hand, he totters and staggers. Every instant the witch, watching from her window, expects to see him fall, but he reaches the gate safely and passes beyond her ken.

Then his trembling limbs gave way, and to the horror of Prometheus Hornblower, who sits within twenty yards patiently awaiting his advent, he sinks to the earth with a hollow groan.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Patience is wisdom. Bug thy chains until
The gods who laid them on thee strike them off.

ABOUT twenty miles, as the crow flies, from the little village of Astonburne is a small freehold, consisting of a house and about an acre and half of ground, which was once known as "Bishop's Folly," but is now called "Ireton's Sanitarium."

Bishop's Folly was intended for a very private mansion; Ireton's Sanitarium is a very private madhouse. Perhaps the building has in one way fulfilled its destiny, for the Mr. Bishop whose folly has commemorated itself in bricks and mortar must have belonged to the same category as the individuals of whom his successor's establishment is presumably composed.

Mr. Bishop was an eccentric misanthropist, who hated his species so consistently that upon coming into a large fortune he must needs build himself a house they should not even be able to look upon.

Upon his estate was a flat-topped hill of sufficient elevation to be quite a land-mark in the country side. Round the plateau thereof he raised a wall like unto the tower of Babel for height, and within the wall he built a mansion after the solid fashion of a few centuries ago.

The wall was high enough to completely shut out the view of the beautiful valley below, a

small matter, since it prevented the valley below from feasting curious eyes upon the misanthropist's residence.

The total cost of the wall and the house was sixty thousand pounds, and they were warranted by the architect to last a thousand years. The misanthropist might have enjoyed for that period of time the perfect seclusion guaranteed by them but that unhappily the night before he proposed to move into his new mansion Mr. Bishop died.

Bishop's Folly stood empty for a term of years, until it attracted the attention of a Doctor Ireton, whose speciality was diseases of the mind. He secured it for a rental which represented about one shilling per cent. upon the original outlay; he rechristened it by the sounding title of "Sanitarium," and speedily filled it with inmates whose mental aberration was more or less marked.

All were fish who came to Doctor Ireton's net. Maniacs, automaniacs, monomaniacs, dipsomaniacs, kleptomaniacs, and a few sane people whose relatives were far more anxious to imprison them for life in a lunatic asylum than are the friends of the really insane. A most lucrative avocation this modern fisher of men found (and still finds) the keeping of the Sanitarium. The last fish he has landed is the quondam gold-digger, Simeon Blunt.

To some of us there could hardly be a fate more terrible and revolting than to be shut up in a madhouse, under the frightful imputation of insanity, knowing the while that the proprietor and the keepers are the paid agents of them who deprived us of our liberty, tools whose interest it is to prove that the choicest gift of Heaven, our reason, has indeed been taken away.

But Mr. Blunt takes his incarceration very coolly. The man's life has been crammed full of hairbreadth 'scapes and startling incidents. When the monotony of the Sanitarium falls upon him, when his liver gets out of order from the confinement, and the outlook for the future seems more hopeless than usual, he tells himself he "was in a wuss fix when them durned Saraboge Injuns were a-smokin' him out of the cave, or when Judge Lynch had put a rope round his neck down in 'Frisco, and were a-openin' his mouth for to give the word to hoist Sim Blunt into eternity."

"Nil desperandum" is his motto, although if the sentiment were quoted in its original Latin he would probably assure you that the words were Greek to him.

He never despairs as the weeks roll on, bringing him apparently no nearer to the freedom he covets. He is the least troublesome of all the patients in the establishment, and has won the good will of all the keepers.

Meanwhile he keeps his eyes and his ears open, ready to seize upon any feasible opportunity to escape.

And week by week the sum total grows of that debt he intends to pay with interest when he gets the chance, a debt of vengeance contracted by Doctor Tom Evans of Duffelpool, by Moses Sharp, the lawyer, and by Sir Marquiduke Knollys, Baronet.

The possibility of breaking prison is a very remote one. Many an hour, when the attendants, who let him roam freely about the acre and half of enclosed ground, have watched him sit in a warm angle of the wall, and blink like an owl at the sunshine, his thoughts have been busy trying to mature a scheme of escape.

But all his cogitation carries him no nearer the solution of a problem which might be called "how to accomplish the impossible."

In the daytime a dozen pairs of eyes are always on him. Were it not so he could not leap or scale the high surrounding wall with its chevaux de frise of iron spikes and broken glass bottles, nor force its one heavy door, which is kept always locked, barred, and bolted, and is proof against all shocks less violent than the impact of a battering ram or of a cannon ball.

At night the locking, barring, and bolting process is transferred to the door of his cell, which, like the walls and the iron window-bars, is a model of clumsy strength.



[JEALOUSY.]

He might beat his life out against them to no purpose. He can only sit blinking in the sunshine, or lie tossing upon his mattress, whilst he patiently awaits events.

The first event which arouses him from thoughtful inaction to hopeful daring execution is the visit of a carpenter to carry out some necessary repairs in the interior of the house.

Sim Blunt is not allowed to speak to the man or to hold any communication with him, but as Mr. Blunt and the harmless lunatics, under the charge of a single attendant, troop in to dinner, marching in Indian file through a long, narrow passage, the carpenter, with a tool-basket upon his arm, flattens himself against the wall to let them pass.

Sim Blunt's appetite, which adverse fortune and long confinement have hitherto failed to impair, is less voracious than usual to-day. He is breaking the tenth commandment so pertinaciously that he cannot eat.

As other sinners covet their neighbours' wives, oxen, asses, wealth, the quondam gold-digger covets the carpenter's basket of tools.

The meal is over, and the party file out once more, for the proprietor of the Sanatorium likes his patients to amuse themselves out of doors as much as possible for health's sake.

Mr. Blunt stoops to fasten his boot-lace, an operation which takes so long that he comes into position as the last man.

The carpenter is still at work; Sim Blunt sees him enter a room on the left. The flail basket lies propped against the side of the passage. Quick as thought Mr. Blunt stoops and abstracts from it a chisel and a screwdriver.

His slow, heavy footsteps have not halted or faltered, the swoop was sudden and swift as that of an eagle upon its quarry. There is nobody behind to observe it, and the driveller walking immediately in front, his head sunk upon his breast in the despondency of melancholy madness, goes on his way unheeding.

Later in the day an outcry arises. All the inmates of the asylum are paraded and searched, Sim Blunt amongst the rest. All the cells and

rooms are likewise overhauled without success. Mr. Blunt retires growling as soon as they will let him to his warm corner, where he can lie and blink at the sunshine undisturbed.

Not a shadow of suspicion attaches to him in respect of that act of petty larceny which the carpenter avers has been committed. In fact it is the unanimous conviction of Doctor Ireton and his subordinates that the charge is an attempt to extort blackmail in the shape of compensation for a loss which has never been sustained.

Nevertheless it is quite a week before Mr. Blunt deems it prudent to disinter his spoils from under a heap of rubbish in the warm angle of the wall.

He caresses the cold steel lovingly in the darkness that night when his candle has been removed by the attendant, when the heavy key has been turned in the lock, and the massive bolts have been shot in their sockets.

He does not sleep, but tosses and turns with restless wakefulness. Nothing can be done in the way of experiment till peep of day, but with the first glimmering of light between the iron bars of the window he begins to work.

His labour is noiseless and persistent, but it does not last long. In about a quarter of an hour he secretes chisel and screwdriver in the pockets of his clothes, and smears with tallow and afterwards with dust the portions of the door to which he has been applying them. Then with a silent grin which distends his slit of a mouth from ear to ear he creeps between the sheets, and sleeps the sleep of the just.

It is the following night, and Mr. Blunt is restlessly wakeful. He is not waiting for the peep of day, but for the inmates of Ireton's Sanatorium to sink into the soundest portion of the night's slumber, that taken about two a.m. When he deems, after duly allowing for his own impatience, that the hour has arrived he draws the screwdriver from his pocket, and carefully feeling his way proceeds to repeat the task successfully attempted before.

One by one the huge screws of the hinges are

carefully withdrawn and laid aside. Then with a slight exertion of strength he lifts the heavy door a foot or so, insinuates his long, lithe body into the aperture, and writhes like an eel until he has accomplished the first step of his undertaking, and stands upright in the long, narrow passage.

There is not a sound in the darkness as his stockinged feet tread the cool flags. He knows that the outer door will certainly be locked and barred and bolted and chained to a greater degree than his own was, and he cannot work at the fastenings until he has provided some means of illumination.

Hush! a line of light from one of the rooms. Not from one of the patients' certainly, it would be against rules. Mr. Blunt stops and thinks awhile, then he turns the handle of the door, finds that the latter yields to his pressure, and enters.

A woman's sleeping apartment, and upon the pillow a not uncomely face, which he recognises as that of one of the nurses. It is no time for false delicacy. Upon a chest of drawers on the further side of the room a candle is burning. His stockinged feet cross the floor, his outstretched hand grasps the light.

Then as he turns to bear away his prize he glances again towards the sleeper, and with difficulty represses a cry of consternation.

She has raised herself upon one elbow, her bright eyes regard him with the fixed stare, not of terror, but of cool courage and self-command; her right hand is travelling with slow deliberation towards a rope which hangs near.

He knows the use of the rope, it communicates with an alarm bell. A similar one hangs in every room, to be pulled in cases of sudden emergency. There is no time to arrest the nurse's action. In five seconds the alarm will be given, in fifty the passage will be filled with hurrying feet.

"Don't 'ee ring, lass, don't!" cries Simeon Blunt, in gruff accents of despair.

(To be Continued.)

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[A COUNCIL OF WAR.]

GUS MORETON'S STAKE.

A NOVELETTE.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

BROKEN ON THE WHEEL.

It was the day of the great carnival at Epsom, and the downs were thronged by the cosmopolitan humanity that assembles to witness the two minutes' rush and maddening excitement called "the race for the blue riband of the turf."

There were gipsies, beggars, thieves, betting-men, honest or dishonest, as it served their turn, tradesmen, lawyers, barristers, judges, noblemen, and royalty itself gathered together—a wondrous mass of moving life, on which two men among the hundreds on the top of the grand stand were looking down.

They were young and handsome men, with the dress and air of men of birth, cool and collected, with less of excitement and amusement shown in their faces than could be seen in the greater portion of the people around them. Those who seek the highest point of observation at Epsom generally go there to be amused by the vast concourse below, and to gaze upon one of the most beautiful panoramas English scenery can boast of, but these two young men had come there for another purpose, and had neither eyes nor ears for what was going on immediately beneath.

One was employing a field glass to detect some object in the distance, and the other was gazing abstractedly at the clouds, waiting for information his companion might have to impart. "A quarter to three," said he with the glass; "it ought to be done."

"Done, and done again," answered the other.

Both spoke in a low tone, and without any show of excitement, although they were watching for that in which the honour and welfare of a man depended—a man whom both cordially hated, and for whose ruin they had laboured for months.

"Do you think Craddock will fail us, Clintock?"

"If he did," replied he with the glass, "I would have him hunted out of England. I have him tight, Scarbery, and he knows it."

And the lips of Lord Clintock expanded slightly into a smile that was full of meaning.

The Marquis of Scarbery slightly shrugged his shoulders.

"You never can trust those men," he said. "They are generally under the thumb of a book-maker, and can lie to any extent to show cause for failure."

"And if he fails us we are both ruined."

"And Moreton a rich man. By heavens, rather than that I think I could go down to the paddock and stab the Elf King."

"Don't get excited, old fellow; it's bad form. At the worst, you know, the horse might lose."

"It is not a case of might, but must. Sound and well, it is odds on him. Barring accidents, there is not another in it."

Lord Clintock raised the glass again and scanned a field beyond the paddock where two specks of humanity were moving about side by side. Suddenly they pulled up, and a third speck ran towards them. There was a little talking together, seemingly, and they all parted, one walking towards the paddock, carrying, as the glass revealed, a white handkerchief in his hand.

"Tis done," said Lord Clintock, in a low tone.

"Keep cool. I think this fellow on the seat above is watching us."

"That is your fancy. Who the deuce is there here that we know? I think we may go down."

They descended the stairs, up which those

who had seats above were thronging, as the great race was close at hand, and not a word was spoken until they were down below in one of the vestibules outside the boxes of the stand.

"He is with Lady Cleo," said the marquis. "Shall we join them?"

"I think so."

"If he backs the King book it to any amount."

"If the brute should win after all?" said Lord Clintock, with a shudder.

"A horse win with a bit painted by Craddock?" said the marquis. "Bah! impossible! The stuff he uses takes all the pluck out of a horse. The Elf King will cut it as soon as he is wanted to race."

They passed out to the balcony, filled with lovely, patrician women and noble men, and joined a group in the left-hand corner composed of three men and a lady of surpassing beauty. She was perhaps not more than eighteen, but the composed air high breeding gives made her appear older.

Of slender form, with a fine white throat, and small head well poised upon it, she would have been attractive without her eyes being such a deep, resplendent blue, or her lips so full and ripe, or her hair so profuse and rich in its golden hues. Aided by these she was the belle of the course, and a thousand admiring eyes had been resting on her since she took her seat.

Standing close behind her, with one hand upon her chair, was Gus Moreton, of the Guards, the coolest, handsomest, and most reckless man of his set, generous to a fault, and seemingly with no thought or care beyond the hour.

He was in debt, everybody knew, or guessed, and the little patrimony that came to him on his mother's death had long been spent; but he still had his house and servants, gave-recherché bachelor dinners, betted heavily on horses, and managed somehow to keep clear of the Jews. But it was whispered about that he had twenty thousand on the Elf King, and if that noble

horse—a firm favourite with thousands beside himself—failed to win, he was a ruined man.

"Stone broke he will be," said Tommy Drew, of the Blues; "virtually dead, you know."

Tommy himself was on the brink of a similar precipice, but with the curious blindness so common among mortals he could see the peril of another so much more clearly than his own.

The Marquis of Scarbery bowed to Lady Cleo Rosenshaw, and made a few appropriate remarks, and then came the topic of the day.

"What do you think will win, marquis?" Lady Cleo asked.

"Mr. Smartly's Flying Fish," was the reply.

"What odds do you want against Flying Fish?" asked Gus Moreton.

"Ten to one."

"In fifties?"

"Hundreds, if you like."

"Hundreds be it then."

The bet was booked, and Lord Clintock, after a glance at his book, said:

"I want to lay against Elf King."

"What odds will you give?" asked Gus, disregarding a slightly reproachful look Lady Cleo favoured him with.

"I don't think I can give you more than two to one."

"I'll take three."

"To what amount?"

"A thousand."

"Very good."

Again, with a nonchalant air, the bet was booked by the men, and Lady Cleo softly whispered to Gus Moreton:

"You are mad to risk so much on Elf King."

"What do you think I risk?" he asked, softly.

The other men had turned away for the moment to watch the paddock gate, towards which a crowd was hurrying, and Gus and his adorable could exchange a few words.

"All you have in the world," she replied; "perhaps more."

"Ay, more," he said. "I risk all I have for in this world."

"So much, indeed?"

"Will you not guess what that is?"

She lifted her lustrous eyes, swimming with affection, to his, and softly answered:

"No. If I am to know it you must tell me."

"I will, after the race—if Elf King wins."

"And if he loses?"

"Ah! then I cannot tell you what I may do. Would you miss me so much?"

"Oh, Gus!"

"My darling Cleo, if the Elf King loses I am broken—lost."

"How could you be so mad, Gus?"

"Little by little I have been drawn into this accursed sport, and I am in a vortex, from which the Elf King alone can draw me out."

"And if he should do it?"

"I will never bet again."

"Some good spirit guide the Elf King today," softly breathed Lady Cleo.

"The horses are coming out," said Lord Clintock, turning round.

"Which is Elf King?" asked Lady Cleo, fixing her glass upon the advanced group of horses and jockeys, as gay as a picture in a kaleidoscope.

"Scarlet and white hoops are his colours," Gus replied. "See what a magnificent stride he has."

An almost imperceptible look was exchanged between the marquis and Lord Clintock, the latter remarking, in an undertone:

"He goes well."

"Better than he will ten minutes hence," replied the other. "Here comes Flying Fish."

"Which is he?" asked Lady Cleo.

"There—cerise jacket. Looks like winning all over."

"You think so?" said Gus Moreton, quietly.

"Yes."

"Will you back him again?"

"For another five hundred."

"Done. Same odds, of course?"

"You are positively reckless," whispered Lady Cleo.

But Gus Moreton only smiled.

"Flying Fish," he softly said, "can go a mile and no further."

And now, as the horses went sweeping by in their preliminary canter, the air was filled with their respective supporters, shouting:

"I'll back Flying Fish!"

"Who'll lay odds against the Elf King?"

"I'll take six to two against War Eagle!"

"Three to one on the field, bar one!"

And then the horses were gone round the bend and lost behind the bushes on their way to the starting post.

The group behind Lady Cleo's chair could see the many-coloured jackets and caps, first mixed up heterogeneously and then falling for a moment into a line, but ere the starter could cry "Go," Flying Fish and Elf King leaped out and carried their jockeys half round the course before they could be pulled in.

"Bad for your Elf King," said Lord Clintock, turning to Gus.

"You think so. He takes a lot of pumping."

"We shall see."

"Flying Fish can't stand that sort of thing, you know."

"He never bolted before at a start, and I can't tell," was the laconic reply.

Another false start and another, first a horse and then a jockey to blame, and so a good half-hour was spent until just as the attention of Lady Cleo and many others was a little relaxed there was a simultaneous shout from fifty thousand throats "They're off," and the horses were seen sweeping up the hill.

Up the hill and again lost behind the bushes, and then a sudden lull in the storm below, and riotous roar changed to murmuring, until the colours begin to gleam and flash where the bushes grow thin and the roaring began again.

"Nectar leads!"

"War Eagle wins!"

"Elf King is coming!"

And close, with the colours mingled, they sweep round Tattenham Corner and come into the straight.

"Hats off!"

The scene below is now white with upturned faces, and ten thousand fixed glasses are looking in one direction.

"I don't see Flying Fish," says Lord Clintock, suddenly.

"He's staggering about at Tattenham Corner like a drunken man," replied Gus, quietly.

"Here they come!"

"War Eagle wins!"

"Nectar wins!"

"Elf King—Elf King—Elf King!"

The three named are side by side in front, they come up neck and neck until within twenty yards of the judge's chair, when Elf King leaps out and passes the post half a length ahead.

Elf King had won.

CHAPTER II.

BITES BIT.

GUS MORETON stood unmoved behind Lady Cleo's chair, and only smiled and bowed as she turned and extended her pretty hand in congratulation.

"You do not seem to be overjoyed," she said.

"I was so sure of it," he replied.

But under his nonchalance there was the light of a triumph, not alone on the success of his horse, and his dreamy eyes were fixed upon his fair companion with the look of one who has long hoped for a treasure and found it at last. It was a pity that the hour of victory should be marred by a crowd around them.

"So sure of it?" Lady Cleo murmured.

"Of Elf King; and the other hope was strong," he replied. "You will be at Lady Margenbury's to-night?"

"Yes," was softly whispered, and bowing he turned away to meet two faces on which rested the livid hue of great and complete defeat. Neither Lord Clintock nor the Marquis of Scarbery could meet the shock they had experienced unmoved. They were only stoics in part.

"Sorry the Flying Fish cut up so badly," drawled Gus Moreton, "but he was always a bit of a rogue."

"His position in the race," said Lord Clintock, "is unaccountable. One would think he had been nobbled."

It was a cool remark, considering the conspiracy in which he and his friend had played leading parts, but a knave is ever ready to accuse others of knavery. Gus saw the shot was sent at him and received it with a slight smile.

"I shouldn't be surprised at all," he said. "We don't always know what is going on. There was an arrangement to get at Elf King, but I heard of it in time."

"Indeed," yawned the marquis, who had shaken himself into something like composure again.

"Fact, I assure you," Gus replied. "I have the names of all concerned, proof indisputable, and I intend bringing the matter before the club."

"And ruin some wretched jockey or trainer, who is no worse than the rest, but has committed the sin of being found out."

"There is a trainer in it, and two gentlemen also, I regret to say," said Gus. "But I must go down and look at the King."

He turned away from them, leaving the pair with the livid colour again in their faces. The marquis pulled out his handkerchief and passed it nervously over his brow.

"What has he found out? How much can he prove?" he muttered.

"If he really knows anything we shall hear it by-and-by."

"Let us go and find Craddock."

They passed down to the saddling-room, where a number of jockeys, stewards, and others had assembled, and Lord Clintock beckoned a weazened-faced boy over to his side.

"Mr. Craddock," he said—"where is he?"

"Don't know, my lord."

"Not know, you young imp."

"No, my lord, haven't seen him to-day," the boy replied.

"Who saddled Flying Fish then?"

"John, my lord; he come and said master wasn't well, and John himself looked pale."

"Come away," said the marquis to his friend, with an oath.

They hurried outside the stand to a spot where a brougham was waiting. Into this they got and gave the command "To Esher."

"And get there as quickly as you can," the marquis said, "to Craddock's place. I'll get to the bottom of it and know the worst at once," he added. "I think we have been sold."

It was about half-past five when the brougham pulled up at a charming little villa between Claygate and Esher, and getting out they walked unceremoniously into the house. A quietly-dressed woman with a pale face, hearing their footsteps, came out of a side room to meet them.

"Is your husband at home, Mrs. Craddock?" the marquis asked.

"He's upstairs with our two boys, my lord, and he's been in that way I can't make him out," she replied.

"In his own room?"

"Yes, my lord."

Still showing scant ceremony they strode upstairs and abruptly entered a room on the first floor. By a window sat a sturdy, grey-haired man of fifty, his eyes weary with dejection, and altogether the picture of care. At a table sat two young fellows of eighteen and twenty.

"You youngsters go downstairs," said the marquis.

They rose up, touched their foreheads, and with a quick look at their father as they passed him, shambled out. Craddock did not rise nor speak, but sat with his eyes doggedly fixed upon the landscape outside.

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"Now, Craddock," said the marquis, "what is the meaning of this?"

"Meaning of what, my lord?" asked Craddock.

"Your not being at Epsom to-day."

"I was stopped on my way there and sent back."

"By whom?"

"By this bit of paper, my lord."

He took a strip of note paper out of his pocket and handed it over to the marquis, who opened and read.

"The plot to drug the Elf King is known, and you must stay at home. If you come to the course you will be arrested. Your man John will take charge of Flying Fish."

"AUGUSTUS MORETON."

And you stayed at home for this?" asked the marquis, furiously.

"Yes, my lord; for I know Mr. Moreton is a man who would keep his word. It would have been as much as my life and liberty are worth to have gone on to the course to-day."

"But you did the wrong thing by not going—you admitted your guilt."

"Very likely, my lord, and about the best thing I could do, seeing as I could not deny it."

"Who the deuce could have betrayed us?"

"I don't know, my lord, but I think my man John must be in it. He may have overheard us."

"Who was it carried out our arrangement about the meeting in the field and the carrying of the handkerchief?"

"John, most likely."

"Who, of course, gave Flying Fish the painted bit intended for Elf King?"

"Uncommonly likely, my lord. He's the man to do that on his own account. Whatever Mr. Moreton did to save his own horse he would not do anything to injure another man's animal."

"You seem to have a high opinion of Mr. Moreton," sneered Lord Clintock.

"He's an honourable gentleman," said the trainer, "and if I had done business only with the likes of him I shouldn't be sitting here now a ruined man, and my grey hairs steeped in disgrace."

"But you must not take that gloomy view of things," said the marquis; "you must stand out and defy all accusation."

"I shan't do anything of the sort, my lord," replied the trainer. "If I'm had up afore the Jockey Club I'll speak the truth out and out if I'm hanged for it."

"Don't be obstinate, Craddock," said Lord Clintock, soothingly. "Think of us—of our reputation."

"I'll think just as much of yours as you did of mine," the trainer replied. "Elf King won, of course?"

"He did."

"I'm right glad on it, for as true a gentleman as ever walked on earth has been put on his legs again."

The two noblemen had great difficulty in controlling themselves, but they knew no good could come of their quarrelling with the trainer, and affected a good-humoured air. The marquis pulled out his cigar case and held it towards the old man.

"Have a weed, Craddock," he said; "nothing like tobacco to a man that is irritated. You'll be better after it."

"Much obliged, my lord," he replied, "but I would rather not, and if you will excuse me saying it, I think you had better be gone from here, as there are those coming you wouldn't care to meet."

"And who may they be?"

"Mr. Moreton and the admiral, to hear me make a clean breast of it."

"Craddock," said Lord Clintock, with glittering eyes, "do you know who you are making enemies of?"

"I've measured it all, my lord," said the trainer, "and if you trod me under your heel you could not make me feel lower than I am, and if you took my life I'd think it a merciful act."

Gentlemen, I see a carriage coming by the bend yonder, and I think you had better go."

Without further parley they turned and left him, and with awful faces reseated themselves in the carriage.

"We shall have a hard fight for it, Clintock," the marquis said, "but we must do our best. Defeat means social death to us, and we must die hard."

"And kill as many as we can in dying," was the reply.

CHAPTER III.

HOPE REALISED.

AT Lady Margenbury's that night the men who had no wives were late as they generally were on this Derby day, but all who were expected came, and the first to appear were those who were notably losers. Among the earlier arrivals were Lord Clintock and the Marquis of Scarbery, who were all smiles.

After greeting their hostess they turned into the card-room, when the first person they came across was little Tommy Drew, of the Blues, a gentleman whose height was too close to five feet to be pleasant for an aspiring nature, and form as spare as one of the lean kine, but undoubtedly a man of pluck.

He was gifted with an impudence too that often prompted him to make remarks more sensitive and cautious natures would hesitate before giving vent to, and having had a lively day at Epsom, with more wine than winnings, he was now in his most impudent mood.

"How are you, Clintock? Ah, marquis, glad to see you. Were you on the stand to-day?"

"Yes, up to the great race," the marquis drawled.

"Capital run I had for my money," Tommy said. "My horse came in fifth, which is a near thing for me. By the way, I made a good joke after the race was over."

"Something fresh," said Lord Clintock.

"I hope the novelty of the mental effort was not followed by serious results," drawled the marquis.

"Not at all," replied Tom. "I said that the Flying Fish ought to be renamed the Eel, because he stuck in the mud. Bilboes went into fits over it, although he did back the brute."

"Brutes can't run if they are drugged," said the marquis, sleepily.

"Drugged?"

"Yes, Drew. We have the proofs of it, and the matter will be brought before the club, but you needn't talk about it."

"Oh, of course I won't," replied Tommy; "but I say, who's in it?"

"What won to-day?" asked Lord Clintock.

"Elf King, of course."

"Who backed Elf King for two hundred thousand?"

"Only one man that I know of—Gus More—"

"No names, please. You have a head, Tommy, and of course can see as far as anyone, but you need not talk about what a man of your sense must see in a moment."

"Phew! that's serious!" whistled Tommy "and Gus—honest Gus as they call him too—"

"We don't say he knew anything about it mind," said Lord Clintock. "Tell no one that the Fish was drugged and we are on the way to getting at the bottom of it; don't talk about it."

"Not to save my life," said Tommy Drew, fervently.

And straightway he betook himself to Lord Margenbury, an empty-headed nobleman, perfectly bred, but a terrible bore, with as many prejudices in his nature as there are beads on an Indian war rig. He was a slow talker, and a still slower thinker, and he liked Tommy because he was his opposite.

The room was pretty full, and Lord Margenbury had nearly finished receiving guests. They were coming in slowly in ones and twos, and he had time to talk to Tommy, who forthwith went into the Flying Fish story.

Lord Margenbury listened, and his back

stiffened as the narrative was poured into his ears. It would have been offensive to him at any time, but it was doubly offensive to him now, for Gus Moreton's name was mixed up in it. Lord Margenbury was the guardian of Lady Cleo Rosenshaw, and he had a knowledge of the attachment between her and Gus.

"On my word, Drew," he said, "you ought to be careful in this."

"I AM careful," replied Tommy, "for you see I don't go scattering the story about. I tell it to you only. Clintock wants it kept quiet—"

"It can't be kept quiet."

"Until he has got all the proofs together."

"The sooner the better," said Lord Margenbury, with a slight flush on his cold, proud face.

"Does he too know of it?"

"He—who?"

"Moreton."

"No—how should he? But mind you don't let it get any further."

"I must speak to Lady Margenbury of it."

"Then it will be all over the universe."

"I must question your right to doubt the discretion of Lady Margenbury," said his lordship, his back getting stiffer than ever.

"Of—of course—beg pardon," muttered Tommy. "No offence, I hope. Spoke generally with reference to the sex, you know. Beg pardon, I'm sure."

"I've private reasons—I must confide in Lady Margenbury," continued his lordship. "It is impossible for me to withhold it from her, but I will not speak of it to another."

Lady Margenbury, a cheerful, handsome woman, who had endured the dullness of her dull husband for five-and-twenty years with the stoicism of a martyr, heard what was afloat and ridiculed it.

"Moreton," she said, "is an honourable man—thoroughly honest."

"May be," replied Lord Margenbury, "but he was down, and has recovered himself by a coup. Men on the point of ruin sometimes resort to desperate remedies. Where is Cleo?"

"She left me to talk to Lady Wrexley."

"She must be looked after," said his lordship, uneasily. "Until this thing is cleared up Moreton ought to be kept away from her."

"If it can be done," said Lady Margenbury, with a smile.

"I, at all events, will endeavour to do it."

Lord Margenbury went in search of his ward, and like the big blunderer he was sought for her in every place but the right one. Lady Cleo was on the balcony, so conveniently shaded in the corners away from the light of the windows, and in one of the corners she sat with Gus Moreton standing beside her.

Lord Margenbury's house was at Kensington, a fine modern mansion, with thirty feet of garden in front and considerable grounds in the rear. The balcony on which Lady Cleo sat commanded a view of the front, where she could see all that was passing below without being seen, so convenient was the shade.

There was not much to look upon. The carriages were all outside, stretched in a long line down the road, and the servants had withdrawn, either to the kitchen to gossip or to the nearest public-house to drink and talk of their masters and mistresses in the strain one in service naturally falls into.

The guests who left the ball-room for the most part preferred the garden in the rear for a stroll, and Gus and Lady Cleo had the balcony to themselves.

A soft, warm night, with the radiance of countless stars slightly softened by a mist, and the melodious hum of the great life around them buzzing sweetly in their ears.

Let poets sing of the lowing of cattle, the bleating of the sheep, and the hum of bees by day. They fade in their influence upon a heart before the murmur of a great city smoothed down by a convenient distance.

"A delicious night after the turmoil of the day," Gus said.

"It has brought repose to you," Lady Cleo replied, "but others, I fear, have not found it."

"I saw my last race as an interested spectator

to-day," said Gus, after a pause. "I have now recovered all I have lost, and have done with the turf, with its false excitement and treachery for ever. I launch my barque to find a better life."

"Men must have something to amuse them," murmured Lady Cleo. "With some it is gambling, with others cricket, or boating, or driving a four-in-hand, or in seeking sport in distant lands—"

"Or in the land of rest," he interposed.

"And where is that on earth?" she asked.

"The nearest I can think of is where love reigns," he said, lowering his voice. "Oh, Cleo, you know what love I have borne for you, and why I have been silent. In my heart of heart this day I had one great hope, and it was not the beggarly money I won, although it must of necessity play some part in it. I was ruined—a beggar—and would not woo. I staked all to win back that which I had lost. I have been favoured."

"You have," Lady Cleo answered, "and your resolution to abandon it is wise."

"Enough of that, Cleo," he said; "let the money pass. I am saved. Let that suffice for me, and you."

"I rejoice at your good fortune."

"A poor fortune unless you, Cleo, will give me a greater one—your love—"

He paused, and bent over her, and for a moment her head bowed shyly down, but his hand stole down to hers, and the magnetism of his eyes drew hers up to meet them. She could not raise those eyes and keep her lips from him, and he sealed the silent confession of her soul.

"Cleo, my darling."

"My own love."

And then a silence, the sweet silence that often follows the first few moments of outspoken love, the silence of two souls too deeply steeped in love for words:

Oh, happy hour! Oh, precious prime!
And affluence of love and time,

as the poet saith. Happy, yet, oh, so short, and it comes but once, however long our journey through the Valley of Life may be. The unfathomed, unapproached ecstasy of first love in its full flight is never known a second time. To some poor, cheerless hearts it never comes at all.

CHAPTER IV.

A CHECK.

A BRIGHT morning, with the sun creeping slantingly into the room, awoke Gus Moreton to the consciousness of his happiness, and to the knowledge that he had an unavoidable and not precisely an agreeable task before him. As a matter of duty he must call upon Lord Margenbury and ask his consent to his union with Lady Cleo Rosenshaw, for she was under his guidance for full another year.

He had no doubt of the result, he was more sure of it than he had been of the victory of the Elf King, but the task was nevertheless a disagreeable one, and he would have avoided it if possible. But the stern decree of modern social life said "No," and he prepared himself for the ordeal.

First he had breakfast, or rather ordered it, and ate nothing, drinking only a cup of coffee, in a semi-conscious state as far as the coffee went, for he was dreaming of Cleo's eyes, lips, in short, Cleo altogether, and food would not harmonise with her in his thoughts.

Having breakfasted in this fashion he proceeded to dress himself very carefully without the assistance of his valet, who lounged in when the work was done, and was too well-bred to express any surprise or pleasure, although being relieved of any portion of his duty was gratifying to his lazy bones.

"I shall not be at home to-day, Bedwell," he said.

"Not home at all, sir?"

"I do not think so, except to dress. If anyone should call you know what to do."

"Yes, sir."

Perfectly dressed in the best clothes the

modern tailor's art produces, he walked on to Kensington. The excitement of the previous day had made him slightly feverish, and he thought the air would cool him. He arrived at Lord Margenbury's residence a little after twelve, and heard that he was at home.

"My lord has been expecting you, sir, I believe," the footman said.

So far all well, just as he had anticipated, and Gus was ushered into the library where my lord sat reading. He rose very cold and grave, and just touched the hand extended towards him.

"Now what on earth is the meaning of this?" thought Gus, taken a little aback, although he did not show it.

Lord Margenbury motioned him to a chair, and he sat down. A moment's silence followed, and then he went straight at the subject, as a good hunter takes a big fence.

"I have a hope, Lord Margenbury," he said, "that you have an idea of my object in calling this morning."

"I have a full knowledge of it," his lordship replied.

"Then half my task is done," Gus said, going on like a horse over a grass field, "and I trust you have no objection to a union between me and Lady Cleo."

"At present," his lordship said, "I have a very grave objection."

"A grave objection!" exclaimed Gus, pulled up suddenly, but with every nerve and muscle stout and strong.

"A VERY decided objection to the marriage."

"If it is owing to my late pecuniary—"

"Pecuniary matters have nothing to do with my objection," said Lord Margenbury; "nothing whatever. I—I—you must give me a minute—it is a habit of mine to get my ideas—in—in order before speaking. Let me see, the horse you won on is named Elf King?"

"It is."

"To be sure; I have a note of it here. Not a betting man myself, and seldom remember the names of horses. There is another, the Flying Wish—no, Fish—the Flying Fish? You bet against that?"

"A little, having no faith in it. I had a suspicion the horse was unsound, and its running proved it to be so."

"Are you aware that it is supposed to have been drugged?"

"I am not, nor do I believe it."

"Or that your name is mixed up most unpleasantly with this very unpleasant affair?"

"I presume your lordship is jesting," said Gus Moreton, smothering his rising wrath. "I have nothing to do with the baser practices of the turf."

"I trust you will be able to prove it—to prove it," said Lord Margenbury, speaking more slowly than ever, and sitting painfully upright. "It is to be hoped you will be able to do so. You will have an early opportunity."

"Again I must plead for forbearance from your lordship. What opportunity do you refer to?"

"It is a matter that does not concern me, and I cannot enter into further particulars at present—at present, you know. We will leave the subject of my ward in abeyance for the present—it will be better to leave it in abeyance for the present."

"This is an unexpected blow to me," said Gus, rising.

"I hope it is," his lordship said, coldly and calmly.

"And whatever decision your lordship may arrive at, the end will be the same. A year hence Lady Cleo will be free, and—"

"I am quite convinced, Mr. Moreton, that she will not marry a man convicted of dishonourable practices. I cannot say more. I hope I have been misinformed, and that you are really innocent. I am ignorant of turf matters, and can form—ah—no opinion of my own upon the—ah—present case, and—ah—until it is decided—ah—ah—Good morning."

Gus walked out of the room like a man in a dream, and walked down stairs, where he woke up to the presence of Lady Margenbury. She

was dressed, and on her way to the carriage at the door.

From her he had the old, cordial greeting, and he was about to speak of the strange behaviour of Lord Margenbury when she held up her hand.

"Not here," she said, "I know what is coming. You had better come with me. I am only going shopping, and we can talk on the way."

They had the talk, but although Lady Margenbury was hopeful she gave him no real consolation. She did not think he was guilty, none who knew him would ever think that, but she was inclined to believe that the opposing element was very strong against him. He told her the true story of affairs.

"And what have you done?" she asked.

"Nothing yet, but I intended to lodge my charge at the Jockey Club to-day."

"And you have allowed the enemy to steal a march upon you?"

"I have been remiss," he said, "but I was not prepared for this counter-charge, and I was thinking of—"

"Cleo's eyes, of course. How foolish of you to waste time."

"However," he said, "it is not too late. I have the trainer, Craddock, to prove the conspiracy between Clintock and Scarbery, and although the admiral could not go with me to see him yesterday he will be able to prove that I made my charge to him. I do not fear it, but I feel this check bitterly. Does Cleo know of it?"

"Not yet, but I must tell her on my return."

"May I not see her, if only for a moment?"

"Ask yourself if that would be wise."

"I suppose not," said Gus, despairingly, "but I will pull myself out of the fire in spite of them. Will you take a message from me?"

"With pleasure," Lady Margenbury replied.

"Tell her that I am innocent of—"

"No, I will not take THAT. She would believe nothing else."

"Then tell her that whether I live an honoured or dishonoured man my love for her will never die. If honoured I will come to her, but if dishonoured I will put seas between us, so that the shadow of my life may never more rest on hers. Thank God our engagement has not been made public."

"I like your second message better and will take it. Now, here is my draper's where I shall be for an hour at least, and so will dismiss you. Good bye."

"You I hope have no faith in this vile accusation?" he asked, wistfully.

"If I had would you be sitting here?" she asked.

"Of course not," he replied, with a bright smile, "but I am distraught to-day. Thank you, dear Lady Margenbury, for your support. Whatever happens that will be a source of un-failing consolation to me. But Cleo—poor Cleo—what misery for her if I am banished by this vile charge."

He handed Lady Margenbury from the carriage with an air that showed none of the perturbation within him, and hailing a passing hansom bade the man drive with all speed to the Jockey Club.

CHAPTER V.

ON TRIAL.

ILL news flies apace, and ere twenty-four hours were over the town was ringing with rumours about the poisoning of Flying Fish, and the hundreds of men who had backed him to win were mad with fury. They got hold of Lord Clintock's and the marquis's story, took it for granted, and poured out anathemas upon the head of Gus Moreton.

Their revilings dipped in rose-water and made presentable were carried into drawing-rooms, and men and women spoke with bated breath of Gus Moreton as one about to die, for is not being made an outcast by society a form of dying to men like him?

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"Of course the story must be true," Tommy Drew argued, "for look here, he was almost stone broke, and life itself hung on Elf King winning. You may say life hung on, for he would have cut his throat or shot himself as sure as there's a sun above us. And look at his counter-charge; he makes it, and says he can bring forward Craddock to prove it, and now Craddock can't be found."

Thus did Tommy discourse upon the evening of the Oaks Day to a select circle of ladies old enough to hear a little plain speaking upon an unpleasant subject, and young enough to be interested in any form of scandal.

"They say he is sweet on Lady Cleo Rosenshaw," said Mrs. Cranbury Staunton, a lady of ton, and a reputation that would have been objectionable to some people. "I have seen him hanging about her."

"Clear gone there," said Tommy Drew. "Perhaps he has proposed to her."

"Oh, no, or I should have known it. Moreton would have told me instantly. But this is an awkward thing for him. His club, the United, have taken it up, and as soon as the verdict of the Jockey Club is given his resignation will be requested. He was in the park yesterday and was cut by a score of people."

"It is a pity," said Mrs. Cranbury Staunton, "for he is a very pretty fellow, the handsomest man in the Guards."

"Good looking enough I daresay, but too much of him," said Tommy, with an admiring look at himself in a pier glass opposite.

Tommy knew he was smaller than most men, but it was his great boast that he was "proportionate."

"And when a man is so," he used to say, "he need not trouble himself whether he is short or tall."

It was at the house of Mrs. Cranbury Staunton where the above names had associated. She sometimes had an at home, and was holding one that night. The rooms were fairly filled by the élite of society, for the upper ten take no heed of idle rumours, and all their friends are virtuous until they are fairly found out.

"I suppose that Lady Cleo won't show for a time," Tommy said, "it's awkward for her being coupled with a blackleg."

"I expected Lady Margenbury here to-night," returned Mrs. Staunton, "and here indeed she is, and Cleo too."

She rose up and went forward to greet them with one of her sweetest smiles. Both appeared to be in good spirits and joined her group, to the mortal confusion of Tommy Drew, who was helplessly and hopelessly in love with Lady Cleo, and stuttered and stammered like a schoolboy when she spoke to him.

As their eyes met he flushed up and bowed. Cleo bent her head and asked him if he had been to Epsom that day.

"I went on the Marquis of Scarbery's drag," he replied.

"I thought you were going down with Sir Charles Steele," Cleo said.

"Well, yes, I was, but you see," stammered Tommy, "he did not go, being a friend of Gus Moreton's—and cut up—I beg pardon—thing's only talked of, you know—don't mean to say anything painful—and Scarbery was so very pressing."

The marquis had been pressing to provide him with certain things he had set afloat, and Tommy Drew had done no end of mischief by babbling about the ring, for which he was rewarded by being left behind. Having done his work the marquis had no further need of him, and drove off while Tommy was watching the last race from the enclosure.

His blundering explanation brought the dawn of a smile to Cleo's handsome face, and the idle gossip wined under it. If he had not been in love with her it would not have mattered, but it stabbed him to the quick.

Lady Margenbury now took him in hand, and poured oil in his wounds by talking agreeably to him. In a little while they had severed themselves from the rest by withdrawing their chairs and speaking in a confidential tone.

"It was such a mistake of mine, you know," said Tommy, mournfully.

"How a mistake?" asked her ladyship, sweetly.

"Yes, poor Moreton, you know, and things are so black against him."

"Ah, yes, and you know, of course?"

"Well, seeing that I had it all from headquarters, and was the first to hear of it."

"Yes, yes, of course, they would confide in you."

"Clintock and Scarbery are friends of mine. I went to the Oaks with them to-day."

"They are joint owners of that unfortunate horse, Flying Dutchman—no, Flying Fish, I think."

"Yes, and it was rough on them to physic it."

And so Tommy went on, growing more confidential each moment until he had given Lady Margenbury the details of all that had been said to him. Then she quietly dismissed him and signalled to Lady Cleo that it was time to go.

"So soon," said Mrs. Staunton, piteously.

"Cleo is not well," said Lady Margenbury, "and we have a heavy day to-morrow, so we must really tear ourselves away."

As soon as they were safely ensconced in the carriage her ladyship gave Cleo a little congratulatory hug.

"My dear child, it is all well. This is a plot against poor Gus got up by Scarbery and that wretch Lord Clintock, whom you refused two months ago. We will carry him through, and I will send for him to hold a council of war to-night. Margenbury will be busy at the House until two o'clock in the morning, so we have plenty of time for a secret conference. How delightful it will be."

A trusty servant was despatched to the barracks, and in an hour Gus Moreton, looking rather pale, but otherwise unchanged, was shown into Lady Margenbury's boudoir. As soon as the servant had disappeared her ladyship found that she had something to do elsewhere.

"Which will take me a quarter of an hour to attend to, no more," she said, with a playful shake of the forefinger.

Left to themselves the lovers drew close together, and Gus, holding his loved one in his arms, whispered in her ear his gratitude for her faith in him, but she would hear very little of it.

"I should be unworthy of you," she said, "if I doubted for a moment."

"It only shows what a vortex a man may be drawn into," Gus said, "by associating himself with that accursed sport. But I must tell you, darling, the truth. Things look very dark for me."

"Not so dark that the shadow of them will dim my love," she replied; and they whispered softly together while time rapidly ran off his reel a sweet, sweet half-hour of their lives.

"I can give you no more time," said Lady Margenbury, looking in; "it is past twelve o'clock, and the council of war must begin."

They entered upon it at once, and Gus laid down the points for and against him. The disappearance of Craddock was the heaviest thing against him.

"The old man left his house to journey to town, walking to the station, and has not been seen since," he said.

"But did he arrive at the station?" asked Cleo.

"It is supposed so, but in the crowded state of the station and line during the races nobody seems to be able to speak for certain. Some of the porters think they saw him at Esher yesterday, others are equally certain that he did not leave by that station."

He had got thus far when a knock at the door caused them all to start like the guilty conspirators they were, but the alarm was soon over, and Lady Margenbury bade the person outside come in.

A footman entered with a note upon a salver.

"For Mr. Moreton," he said; and Gus took it accordingly.

It was a common envelope, and within it was a scrawling epistle with letters that looked as if they had been written by a drunken man. He scanned them quickly, repressing the rising excitement within him.

"Any answer, sir?"

"Say that I will come directly."

The footman bowed and disappeared, and Gus, rising with a flushed face, stood looking at his two fair supports like a man from whom the shackles have been suddenly taken.

"This note is from Craddock," he said. "Shall I read it to you?"

They signified their desire to have it read, and with a glance round the room as if he feared a listener he softly breathed the contents of the letter.

"HONOURED SIR,—On my way to you yesterday I was set upon by two men who knocked me down, and, as I think, put me into a cab they had waiting, and shut me up in a lonely cottage, where I was left bound and, as they thought, secure. But I've broken away and I am at your rooms. It was your servant who told me you had gone to Lady Margenbury's. Excuse my writing, but I can't help thinking that you must have been anxious about me, and I want instructions about what to do—hide here or show myself anywhere else. No living creature who knows me have set eyes on me since I came away. I can guess who attacked me, but I couldn't swear it.—Believe me to remain, honoured sir, your very obedient servant, JAMES CRADDOCK."

"What advice do you give me?" Gus asked Lady Margenbury.

"When does the court sit to try your case?" she asked.

"To-morrow."

"Keep him close till then, and let him appear at the last moment. Go at once to him. More than life itself depends upon his safe keeping."

She shook hands with Gus and turned away while he bade Cleo adieu. The embrace exchanged between the happy lovers was almost as sweet—it never could be quite so sweet, you know—as that with which they sealed their plighted troth.

Both were lifted up to the seventh heaven now that there appeared to be a prospect of the great cloud being driven away.

CHAPTER VI.

FINALE.

SOCIETY had settled it, and everybody was so sorry for Gus Moreton, and nobody expressed more commiseration than Lord Clintock and the Marquis of Scarbery. Of course they have been obliged to prosecute the matter on public grounds, or they would gladly have passed it over. The ten thousand they had lost was as nothing to the honour of a man who had been their friend.

At the clubs in the morning it was on every tongue. The committee of the Jockey Club met at twelve, and it was expected that all would be over by half-past.

At the United the excitement was greater than anywhere, for the honour of the cloth had been tarnished, and deep and bitter were the anathemas breathed against handsome Gus Moreton of the Guards.

"If it had been one of the line we might not have bothered ourselves about it," said a dandy, lounging by the window, and looking into the street with lack-lustre eye. "But the household men are supposed to be quite clear of that sort of thing."

"I don't know why you should arrogate yourself, Deverne, on that head," replied a quiet, grey-bearded man, who was calmly reading the morning paper. "We have some good stuff among us."

"Beg pardon, Stanley," drawled Deverne. "didn't see you were there. But it's right for a fellow to stand up for his own."

"Certainly, if he can do so without injuring

others maliciously. As a matter of fact, I don't believe your man is guilty."

"You don't?"

"Not a bit of it. He has been the victim of some rascality."

"You are a good fellow, Stanley," said Deverne, "and I will never speak against the line again."

At this moment Tommy Drew came running in, he never walked, with a lugubrious expression of face that excited the tepid anger of Deverne. "Confound it, Drew," he said, "what's the matter with you?"

"The Jockey fellows' just sent. I'm thinking about poor Moreton," Tommy replied.

"I would not let any thought give me the countenance of an undertaker's mute," drawled Deverne. "You are a very active fellow, go and see what news you can pick up, and let us know how it is going."

Tommy was delighted with his commission, nothing could have been more delightful to his inquiring mind, and he was off like an arrow from a bow. A full hour was passed by the listless groups in the club-rooms, all too lazy and inert, or pretending to be so, to get excited about anything.

At last Deverne, who sat by the window, lifted his heavy eyelids and languidly said:

"Drew's coming round—corner—like a Derby winner. Draw first—rest—nowhere."

The slightest possible stir took place among the men, and one or two bit their lips nervously. Captain Stanley, of the Fifty-third Regiment of the line, put down his paper and made no attempt to conceal his anxiety.

Then in came Tommy Drew, with his hat tilted back in a most ungentelemanly manner, and his face glowing with excitement. He sank into a chair and panted for a third of a minute before he could speak.

"Found guilty?" drawled Deverne.

"Innocent for a thousand," said Captain Stanley, briskly.

"You are right," said Drew, turning to the last speaker, "and it is the rummiest start that ever was. Clintock and Scarbery stated their case and had a vet to prove that Flying Fish was undoubtedly poisoned. Moreton had been seen early in the morning talking to Craddock in a secret sort of way outside the stables, and the reckless way he laid against the horse went all against him. The club made up their mind."

"You said he was innocent?" interposed Deverne, with unwonted excitement appearing in his demeanour.

"So I did—but do give me time," gasped Tommy. "I am so hurried you can't think! When I heard the climax I positively staggered. The case was as good as settled, and the admiral was growling over the disappearance of Craddock, when in walks Craddock himself, and completely turns the tables. He has two notes to show—could prove where Lord Clintock bought the stuff for Elf King, and his manner was so convincing that the real story was made clear."

"And what is the real story?" asked Captain Stanley.

"One of the stablemen stole the bottle, which Craddock did not intend to use, and drugged Flying Fish with it in return for a blow from a whip Clintock had given to him. The man followed Craddock and swore to it; and what's more he said he would do it again. So Moreton is clear, and the other two are clean gone. Before night they will both be in Boulogne, and you won't see them on Monday at Tattersall's for the settling. On my word I never was so staggered in all my life."

"Ah—yes!" drawled Deverne; "but it is a good thing for our men. I am glad Moreton is all square. It would have been an awful blow."

"And I am pleased that a thorough good fellow has escaped a sharper's snare," said Captain Stanley. "He will be wise enough to keep out of the way in the future."

"He gave up the turf when the Elf King won," said Tommy Drew, "and he is going in for matrimony. He will have the loveliest creature that ever lived for a wife, one whom I—I—

but I don't know what I am saying. I don't know that I ever was so staggered before."

Away from the fierce excitement and the misery that followed a life upon the turf Gus Moreton and his bride settled down at Harpenden, his charming house in Wiltshire, and soon all trouble of the past was speedily forgotten in the bliss that accompanied a union cemented by love.

Society has forgotten that Gus once stood on the brink of destruction, as it has forgotten the two wretched noblemen who hurried abroad to hide their degraded faces in the doubtful gambling saloons of Monaco, and at the various watering-places where questionable high-bred society most abound.

They did not pay their bets on the Derby that was so fatal to them, and thenceforth they stood upon the list of defaulters who are never forgotten or forgiven by the gambling world. You may rob your butcher and baker and tailor and live untouched by the breath of scandal, but fail to pay a gambling debt and you are outcast for ever.

Well, it is the way of the world, and we will not quarrel with it. Let it suffice that Gus Moreton came out from the fire unscathed, and lives to enjoy the sweetness that is without parallel on earth, the sweetness of a home blessed by a woman who loves him more dearly than her life.

PANSY'S RINGS.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

"Mr love is sweetly dreaming
The happy hours away."

THE words were sung in a rich baritone voice to a skilfully rendered accompaniment on a guitar; and Pansy Raymon, springing up in delighted surprise, stole noiselessly to the window to hear her first serenade. No one in Greenvale possessed a voice like that, and there was no youth of her acquaintance who could "wake the strings" of a guitar harmoniously. Peeping carefully through the lattice she succeeded in catching a glimpse of him; it was sufficient, however, for she drew back with mantling blushes. The moonlight was most brilliant, and had revealed a pair of dark eyes looking up from an exceedingly handsome face, which she remembered having seen at church on Sunday. Those eyes had followed her as she passed down the aisle, and she had lost her glove in the vestibule, and he had been the one to return it, with a graceful bow, as she was entering her carriage.

Pansy was devoted to floriculture, and her room was seldom without a bouquet. Feeling her way to the toilet table, she returned to the window with a handful of great velvety pansies tastefully arranged with lilies-of-the-valley and delicate ferns. The blind was carefully opened a very little way, and the flowers thrown, when, as she drew her hand back, it struck the blind, and her favourite ring, an emerald star, fell in close pursuit of the bouquet. She hoped that he would not see it, or if he did that he would not imagine it intended for him; but, alas! when she gathered courage again to look down he was singing a pretty impromptu of thanks and farewell, the ring gleaming on his finger; she could see it distinctly as his hand wandered over the strings of his guitar.

"Impudence!" she exclaimed, under her breath, and then clasped her hands in astonished horror and dismay as he took his departure.

Next morning Pansy explained how on throwing a bouquet to her unknown musician she had lost her ring, but without mentioning where she last saw it; so there was a dutiful amount of searching under her window by the household; but of course their trouble was vain.

Her loss was almost forgotten when one day the mail brought a tiny package directed to Miss

Pansy Raymon in an undoubtedly masculine hand, which aroused the young lady's curiosity not a little. She waited to open it in her own room, and found a jeweller's box containing, not her emerald star, as she had suspected, but a magnificent solitaire diamond ring. More disturbed than pleased at having such a valuable jewel in her possession, without the ability of returning it, and inclined to regard its sending as an impertinence, she was greatly puzzled what to do. Tell her father? He would be very angry, and could do nothing after all, she thought; so she locked the ring safely away among her treasures and waited in silence for what might happen next.

Time passed on. The roses faded slowly and summer breezes went with the summer birds, and soon snow-flakes and icicles ushered in November. Pansy was eighteen now, and her aunt in London wrote to insist upon her spending the winter with her and being introduced into society. So our heroine took her first trip to the metropolis, and there was a week of shopping and beautifying which resulted in the introduction of a very charming and becomingly dressed young lady at Mrs. Grantly's ball. Mr. Raymon had come in town to be present on the momentous occasion, and took great pride in presenting his lovely little daughter to his old friends. He had been a resident of London many years ago and was still well known there.

And how did Pansy bear this transportation from the woods and cottages of Greenvale to a ball-room in the height of the season? She stood by a tall vase of Jacqueminot roses, a petite figure robed in ivory grenadine over lustreless, rich silk of the same shade; a heavy cord and tassels of gold and chenille hung low around her waist, supporting her dainty fan. The curls of her red-gold hair were gathered low on her neck, a cluster of pansies nestling among them. A twin cluster was fastened at her throat.

"Queer flowers for a debutante, my love," her aunt had said, but yielded finally, as every one did, to her whim.

A group of young gentlemen standing near were observing her as she stood there, all unconscious of their eyes, conversing in a delightfully fresh and vivacious manner with her late partner in the dance.

"Who is she?" asked one.

"Mrs. Raymon's niece; a rustic, I opine; never heard of her before," said another.

"She looks as if her speech were worth hearing," said the next. "I never saw a brighter face."

"That was not rustic," exclaimed the first speaker, as the subject of their remarks gracefully accepted an invitation to promenade and moved toward the hall, bearing head and train like a queen.

"That was!" emphatically cried his friend; for as Pansy neared the staircase someone coming down awkwardly struck a vase of ivy which had been set in a niche near the foot, and as it was falling she sprang impulsively to the rescue and deftly caught it. It was a thoroughly unsophisticated act, but very pretty and graceful. The water from the vase ruined her dainty gloves and sprinkled her dress a little. She was relieving her arms of this shower by the use of her handkerchief, while half a dozen more were being offered by sympathetic admirers, when her father's voice said:

"My daughter, let me introduce to you Mr. Ryland, the son of an old friend."

"I hope Mr. Ryland did not witness my frantic attempt to rescue that ivy," thought Pansy, after a little bow; and then she chatted on without glancing at the new-comer.

"I suppose I ought to apologise all round for depriving the gentlemen of so good an opportunity for distinguishing themselves in agility, and," with a slight laugh, as she delivered her damp handkerchief to a maid, "endurance of sprinkling."

Then looking up, she gave an involuntary start, and a flash of colour came to her cheeks on recognising her serenade. She caught up her fan and card hastily to hide her confusion.

"May I find a place for my name there?" asked Mr. Ryland, looking at the card.

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"It is filled," she said, holding it up with a deprecating little smile.

"You have given two waltzes to Howard; he might divide."

But Howard thought not, and Mr. Ryland was obliged to content himself with seeing Miss Raymon glide around the room with other partners. He found a place near her at the refreshment table, however, and enjoyed what scraps of her conversation he could hear. Presently she turned to him as her partner left her for an instant, and said, a little haughtily:

"I think each of us has a piece of the other's property, Mr. Ryland. I would be glad to exchange."

He bowed and smiled mischievously as he answered:

"You did me a great honour, and I thought it but courteous to show my appreciation of so handsome a return for my poor music. If you are not pleased with my ring, of course I will send it to Hong Kong or anywhere you like; but I can never part with your gift."

She was thoroughly indignant.

"You know very well, sir, that my losing my ring was entirely accidental. You should not have touched it at all. How dare you call it my gift?" and the lovely eyes flashed and the lips quivered, and Pansy was struggling hard to keep back the tears.

Fortunately her partner came back just then, and she returned with him to the ball-room.

"What is it, Pet?" asked her father, coming up in time to see her excited face.

"I am afraid I am conducting myself like a vernal young lady, papa," she whispered, with a low laugh at her own expense.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed her father, reassuringly. "You need not be yourself, and there is no fear."

"Ah! I wish all saw me with your eyes!"

Then someone claimed a dance, and another and another followed, until the last waltz was over, and then she was on her way to the robe-room, leaning on her father's arm.

Mr. Ryland met them with her wraps, and proceeded to fold them around her after a polite "Permit me."

"Ah, Ryland," said Mr. Raymon, "take care of Pansy and I will look for my sister." And he moved off.

His daughter submitted with a very bad grace, not saying a word, though her companion made several remarks as they passed through the long hall. At length, after a short silence, he said, half-laughing:

"I think you are Scotch, Miss Raymon; they never forget."

Still silence from the offended beauty; and now they were on the foot-way.

"I gained another bouquet of pansies to-night," he said, making another attempt at conversation. "You lost those in your hair when you caught that vase, you know. They fell on your train, and I transferred them to my button-hole."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" cried Pansy, almost beside herself with vexation; and after darting a furious glance at the part of his coat designated, where her flowers appeared quite at home, she sprang into the darkest corner of the carriage and burst into tears.

"I am," he said, quickly, and placed the pansies in her hand; and then he had to step back to allow Mr. Raymon and his sister to enter, and they had driven off, and he was sauntering down the street calling himself hard names for having made that "little darling cry."

He paced his room a long time before retiring, although the bronze clock on his mantel warned him that to-morrow's dawn was near.

She recognised me to-night and she blushed," he soliloquised; "but that may have been annoyance at remembering the rings. She is very much troubled about them," he went on, taking the little emerald star from his pocket-book and regarding it, half smiling. "Ah, little ring, if I send you to her will you tell her all I have said to you? Perhaps I may tell her some day—who knows?"

Then he began to wonder what she would say and think if she knew why he had taken her ring and kept her flowers, and that he had dreamed

of her sometimes, and how quickly his heart had beat when he met her to-night; and then the little clock chimed five, and Mr. Ryland sought the arms of Morpheus for the few hours left before breakfast time.

The "little darling" waked that morning very sleepy and a little cross, but unusually pretty. She was putting the finishing touches to a very recherché breakfast costume when her aunt's maid entered, bearing a beautiful bouquet of rosebuds. A card attached bore the name of John Ryland, at sight of which Pansy's eyes flashed a little.

"If he hopes to condone his offence in this way he is very much mistaken," she thought; and remembering her various causes of complaint against him she was tempted to consign his gift to the four winds of heaven by tossing it from her window; but she recollected that she was not in Greenvale but London, where it was not "the thing," perhaps, to fling flowers in the street; and then they looked so fresh and lovely, and their fragrance was delightful.

There was a cluster of moss rosebuds in the centre, and she admired moss roses extravagantly. They would look exquisite in the belt of her dress, and, after all, they were not to blame for his shortcomings, she concluded, and proceeded to draw out the cluster of buds, when, lo! tied among them by a ribbon she found her long-lost ring.

She was greatly relieved by its return, and treated the flowers with great consideration. Unwinding carefully the long ribbon by which they were confined (Jack had arranged them himself), she grouped them artistically in a vase, excepting those reserved for her belt, supplied them with water, and then did an odd thing: instead of slipping the recovered ring on her finger and tranquilly descending to breakfast, she hung the ring on the rumpled ribbon that had tied the bouquet and fastened it around her neck, hiding it under her fichu; and then she sat down and cried! Girls are odd beings!

However, she was her own merry self at breakfast, and declared herself quite equal to a visit to the art gallery with her father. They returned in time for luncheon, which proved a tête-à-tête, Mrs. Raymon being confined to her room with a severe headache. Pansy was therefore left to her own resources for entertainment when her father departed down town. He must return to Greenvale to-morrow, he said, and must finish his business in the city to-day. After failing to interest herself in the half-dozen books she looked into, Pansy curled herself up on the drawing-room rug and began to sing softly, watching the fire. She was passionately fond of music, but had never learned to perform on any instrument, and so this habit had come to her of singing to the fire all sorts of odd tunes, scraps of ballads, hymns or operas—whatever struck her fancy. Her voice was untuned and weak, but wonderfully sweet. She was trilling out a medley, in blissful unconsciousness of her surroundings, when her aunt's velvet-shod footman announced:

"Mr. Ryland, miss."

"Allow me to help you to your feet," said the gentleman, coming quickly forward, with undisguised laughter in his eyes.

"Thanks," she said, frostily, scrambling up without accepting his proffered assistance. "I am accustomed to stand alone."

He turned hastily for a chair, thereby hoping to conceal the smile that would curve his lips; but she was quick to see and resent it.

"I am indebted to you, sir, for the return of my ring. You will excuse me while I bring yours." She left the room in spite of his remonstrances. Returning, she found him standing by the piano, touching the keys absently. "I would like to hear you sing," she said, abruptly, after she had given him his ring and he had bowed just a little proudly, with a slight flush on his handsome face as he received it.

He seated himself at her remark, and after a few random chords sang "My Queen." Before he had finished the first verse Pansy had forgotten all her anger and listened entranced.

"Ah!" she drew a long breath as he ended. "Don't stop!"

So he sang another and another, glancing up at her now and then as she stood leaning on the piano, her chin resting on her clasped hands, her eyes following his fingers over the keys.

"May I hear you again?" he asked, as he stood up at last.

The reference to his entrance was unfortunate. The old flash was in her eyes, and it was a haughty little lady who answered that she knew nothing of music. In vain he offered to play her accompaniment, to sing with her; she would not be persuaded; so they returned to the fire, he wondering what might be safely said next, she wishing he would go before anything happened to make her appear more ridiculous in his eyes.

"Shall you beat Mrs. Gray's reception to-morrow night?" he asked, finally, deciding that so innocent a question could do no harm.

"Yes; it will be my first; and as I am a very poor dancer I do not anticipate a delightful evening. One cannot help feeling sorry for one's partners, you know."

"Of course I do not know in the least what entitles them to pity, unless it be the brevity of the dance," he said, and added, "Have you so far forgiven my theft of last night that I dare ask to escort you to-morrow?" in a tone of comic humility, but with eyes still mischievous.

"Wearing my pansies was the least of your offences," said Pansy, the absurdity of her anger striking her for the first time, and inclining her to forbearance. "Since you are very humble, I will give you absolution on condition that you never laugh at me again," she continued.

"Think how I have suffered, and dispense with conditions. I have been obliged to give up all the property I had that was worth anything, and to say that I was ashamed of myself!" he said, merrily; and Pansy, too much amused to be annoyed, laughed and answered jestingly.

They succeeded in spending a delightful evening, notwithstanding the inauspicious beginning.

The reception was a success, and so was Pansy's dancing. As Mrs. Raymon said, "Making mistakes in the figures does not much matter, my love, so you are not awkward and can waltz." And she could waltz.

The winter passed on in a delightful whirl of gaiety. There were parties here, there and everywhere, and very few to which Mrs. Raymon's charming niece was not invited. Pansy and Jack met very often now. He was a frequent visitor at her aunt's. It was in January that someone conceived the idea of a masquerade ball.

"Do you know, Miss Pansy," said Jack, one evening, after the invitations had been received, and Pansy and her aunt had been some minutes discussing costumes, "I would like to see you represent Flora."

"Oh, nonsense, my dear boy!" cried Mrs. Raymon. "Quite too heavy a character for her. She must be wood-nymph, fairy, or something of that style—simple and yet pretty."

"I am silenced," said he; "only if you decide to be a fairy, Miss Pansy, do be Titania; the others are such insignificant little creatures."

"What shall you be?" asked Pansy.

"I don't know—don't imagine I am small enough for Puck. I will be whatever you say," he added, with a quick look at her.

"You look best as yourself—at least—I mean——" and she stopped in confusion, fearing he might put a wrong construction on her words.

"You have taught me better than to steal a compliment, Miss Raymon; have no fear," Jack said, answering her thought jestingly.

Then followed an enumeration of gauzes, satins, tissues, wands, slippers, and colours that set Jack's teeth on edge, and finally made him take his departure in despair of ever hearing the end of the horrible French names.

"The neck à la Pompadour, and just a slightly bouffant draping in the back, and a tablier front, and——" came ringing down to him as he passed through the hall hastily, and made his escape into the street.

The night of the ball came, and Pansy went as Titania in a lovely combination of silver gauze



[A QUEEN OF HEARTS.]

and white satin, with crystal sceptre and crown. It was some time after her arrival when Mr. Ryland came. She knew him instantly, notwithstanding his mask, by the cluster of panes in his buttonhole.

She had capriciously refused to allow him to escort her that evening, and he seemed to resent it, for he kept aloof from her nearly all the evening. True, there was hardly room for him among her circle of admirers, but it was not like Jack to be kept back by a crowd.

She grew tired of it all at last—the glare of light on so many gaudy colours, and the constant loud music—and stealing off alone she found a seat amid some palms in the conservatory, and sitting down with a sigh of relief she fell into a happy reverie.

She built some pretty air-castles, judging from her face. So Jack thought as he stood hidden among the dark leaves watching her, and wondering what had brought such a lovely flush to her cheeks and such a glad light to her eyes. The old habit came back as a slight sound started her from her musing, and she began to sing softly, almost under her breath.

Suddenly her eyes fell on a glove on the floor near her feet, and taking it up, she glanced at the initials on the inside, "J. R."

"His," she said, gently.

And a sudden impulse seizing her, she raised it with a pretty caressing motion to her cheek.

Jack stood paralysed for a second; in another he had sprung to her side.

"My precious darling! Now I know that you love me!" he cried, rapturously.

And he might have damaged the violets at the fairy queen's belt had she not been as quick to start back in indignant terror.

"You know nothing of the kind, sir! It was dishonourable and contemptible, your watching me! I had no idea the horrid old glove was yours!" cried Pansy, almost breathless with anger at his having surprised her so, and facing him with haughty defiance as she tossed the unfortunate glove at his feet.

"I did not say it was mine," said Jack, unable to resist teasing her even then, and enjoying the discomfort with which she received this remark. "Pansy," he cried, earnest enough now, and catching her hand as she was turning away, "don't be angry with me. I was searching for you to tell you that I love you, and when I found you here I could not help waiting a minute; you looked so lovely that I did not dare to speak until I saw—oh, darling, how could I help being glad at what I saw? How could I be silent?"

But she had withdrawn her hand, and walked relentlessly on.

"Pansy, will you be my wife?"

Still proud silence.

"I have a right to an answer," he said, growing stern, and stepping before her as they neared the conservatory door.

"You shall be answered," said Pansy, trying to make her five feet two look commandingly

tall. "I will not be your wife, Mr. Ryland. Is that sufficiently definite?"

"Don't you care for me at all?" pleaded Jack, not yet convinced that she was in earnest.

"Not a feather's weight! Let me pass, sir," was the chilling answer.

And Jack, all pride now, stood aside with the air of a prince, saying:

"Certainly. Allow me to assure you that you need fear no further annoyance from me."

She passed by, inclining her head with a freezing:

"Thank you."

Poor Jack! He had been so sure. Turning back to the seat where he had found her, he saw Titania's sceptre on the floor where it had fallen when she sprang up. Hastily seizing it he returned to the ball-room, hoping to entrust it to her aunt, but found that the Raymons had left; so he took it home with him, and next morning Pansy received it with a little slip of paper twisted around it. He wrote:

"If Titania is ever sorry, let her send Jack the emerald ring."

The little queen sat down and cried as she had not done since that day three months ago, when she had found her ring tied among the roses.

"You know your own mind best, my dear, but I think you have made a mistake," was all her aunt said when Mr. Ryland's calls were missed.

February was disappearing rapidly, and Pansy must be at home by the first of March. So there were numerous farewell calls to make, and presents to select for the loved ones at home, and soon her last day in London had come, and her aunt was seeing her safely in the train, bound for home.

"You will not be afraid, Pansy? It is not a very long distance, and your father will be sure to meet you at Covington station," she said.

The carriages were very much crowded, and they had gone some distance before Pansy noticed that Mr. Ryland occupied a seat near by.

"What in the world can he be going to Greenvale for?" thought she, forgetting that the trains went to many other places, and did not go there.

She opened a book with which her aunt had considerably provided her, and kept her eyes resolutely fixed upon it, appearing blissfully ignorant of whom her fellow-travellers might be.

"It is upside down," said a well-known, mischievous voice at her elbow, and she looked up to meet Jack's laughing eyes.

They angered her as usual. How dare he ridicule her so?

"I beg your pardon," he said, coldly enough, as he noted her haughty face. "I would not have intruded upon you, but seeing you alone I thought I might be of some service. If so you may command me."

And with a slight bow he returned to his seat before she had uttered a word.

Mile after mile of houses, woods and fields swept by the window, and she watched them in a half-dazed fashion.

Would it never reach Covington, that miserable train? The old lady on the same seat with her left the carriage at the first stopping place, and slipping into her seat by the window Pansy tried to open it a little.

The carriage was so crowded and close that she could scarcely breathe. A hand reached over from the seat behind her and raised the sash. Turning to express her thanks she found Jack.

"This seat was vacated a moment since, and I took it to be within speaking distance should you care to call on me," he said, answering her look of surprise.

"I thank you," Pansy said, gently, quite mollified by his unobtrusive kindness.

"You look tired," said Jack, presently, seeing her cheek turn pale and her head droop more and more wearily as the time crept slowly by. "Does not this scenery interest you?"

And he began to tell her about the different places they were passing, and to talk about any-

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thing he could think of that might cause her to forget her fatigue.

He succeeded so well in his endeavour to divert her that she was chatting and laughing quite merrily when the guard called "Stamington!" and Jack started up.

"This is my destination—unless"—and he bent low over her—"I may see you safely home."

"That is entirely unnecessary, thank you. Papa meets me at Covington, which is not far distant now." Then she held out her hand as he was leaving, and added, "You have been very kind."

"You have not," he said, in a low, quick tone, and then he was gone, and the train was moving off.

He stopped on the platform as it was passing, and raised his hat as she looked out. He was very near, and the train moved slowly; should she—could she?

And the next instant Pansy had snatched the ring from that ribbon around her neck, and leaning from the window thrown it to him. She had only time to see him catch it before the swifter motion of the train left him out of sight.

Covington was soon reached now, and Pansy being well known at the station was warmly welcomed and soon found herself seated by her father in his comfortable carriage and on the way home.

Meantime, Jack, after catching that ring, rushed to the station-master, and asked him when the next train for Covington was due in such a wonderfully joyous tone that the man grinned in sympathy.

Fortunately he had not long to wait, for he was not a patient man, and in his mood delay was exasperating. He felt that engines and horses were no better than snails. Everyone seemed sleepy, and he had begun to despair of ever reaching Mr. Raymon's house when his driver turned into the gates, and two minutes more found him at the door.

A neat little servant girl answered his knock and said that Miss Pansy was in the library; would he enter?

So he opened the door indicated, and seeing only Pansy in her white dress standing by the mantel, he went directly to her side, catching her hands quickly in his as she was about to run away, and bending his head to them, he said:

"You are the veriest little flirt in the world, but you are mine at last!"

And his glad voice trembled a little.

"By Jove!" came in astonishment from an arm-chair on the other side of the fire, and Pansy rushed in confusion from the room, leaving her somewhat discomfited lover to face Mr. Raymon.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he began, on recovering himself, "but she has escaped me so many times, and I did not see you."

Then he told his story—how Pansy had rejected him and then thrown the ring from the train window, and now she had just run away from him again, and—

"Mayn't she come back, sir?" he ended, in a tone of anxious entreaty.

"I think she will, Jack," said the old gentleman, and their hands were clasped cordially as he continued, "She was telling me a ring story as you came in, but had not gone far enough to prepare me for quite the style of entrance you made."

And he laughed and good-naturedly went in search of his capricious little daughter, who after all wore the solitaire diamond ring.

If Mr. Gladstone goes to the Upper House it will be as the Earl of Oxford.

On account of the Princess of Wales riding on the opposite side of her horse to that which ladies usually do, there have been of late several imitations of the fashion seen in London.

A BAKER STREET gentleman assures us that he has utilised the top of his house for a greenhouse, where he is growing strawberries, cucum-

bers, and French beans. His modesty forbids him alluding to the condition of his crop of corn.

It is rumoured that the Ministry wish to get rid of Mr. Forster by making him the new Governor of Madras.

AN Ohio doctor cured himself of small-pox by eating lemons, and declares that it is a specific for the disease.

THE "Morning Post" appeared on Whit Monday as a penny paper.

M. DE LESSERS is going to cut through the Isthmus of Corinth. Nothing seems sacred to monsieur; he would have severed the Siamese Twins.

A DOG-OWNERS' protective society has been formed to exterminate, if possible, by the united co-operation of dog-owners, the spreading practice of dog-stealing.

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

CRANES FISHING IN CHINA.—The ease with which the crane is domesticated is well known, inasmuch that the account given by Viguier of the employment of that bird in South America to tend sheep is not incredible, and it need not be a surprise that the Chinese, who have rendered the fractious and unsocial cormorant subservient to piscatorial industry, have in like manner utilised the social and sagacious crane. This they have accomplished, but to a limited extent. Crane fishing boats are found sometimes half a dozen together, each boat having a pair of birds tethered by string and ring. Sometimes they are pushed into the water, from which they emerge with their finny prey, but it is not clear whether these waders are plunged into the stream, or merely made to stand and fish. It is believed that they are made to dive; if so they may prove to be a new species slightly web-footed. Those seen at Turgin neither waded nor dived, being employed as retrievers, speeding from the hunter boat to seize and bring back birds which had been brought down by matchlock.

SOMETHING ABOUT BRICKS.—On the antiquity of the brick as a building material, says the "Builder," it is needless, nor is it our intention, to insist. The great national collections of Europe, the British Museum foremost in number, show us bricks sun-dried and baked from the ruins of Nineveh, and from the days of that city to the present moment bricks have never ceased to be an important instrument in the hands of the builder. That throughout Asia Minor they were largely employed we have seen only very recently proved in these columns, M. Bayet, in his work on Miletus, having shown that the famed palace of Croesus was built of no more costly materials than honest brick. What those bricks were and their quality are even to this day appreciated by the natives, who for many centuries have plundered the ruins to build or to patch up their own even more ruinous houses. The use of bricks among the Romans, who largely employed them as building materials, as we see in the familiar instance of the Temple of Concord, has been more than once the subject of the inquiry of industrious antiquaries, for the Romans were not content with producing the flat tile-like brick, which is so often to be met with in the lower portion of antique structures scattered over the empire and that are known in England, but their bricks are indelibly stamped with the mark of their maker, the names of the reigning consuls, and sometimes the year. From one source then more than one patient archæologist has gathered a rich store of information. But few inquirers have ventured far on the apparently arid and difficult road, which has hence remained little explored.

COAL.—The ancient Britons are believed to have discovered coal before the Roman invasion.

It was not, however, used as a fuel in England before probably the beginning of the twelfth century. In 1234 Henry III. gave the townsmen of Newcastle leave to dig coals and stones from the common soil, but wood continued to compose the general fuel, at least so long as the forests and thickets afforded an ample supply for that purpose. In the reign of Edward I. the use of coal was forbidden by royal proclamation in consequence of the supposed injurious effect of the smoke. But in spite of this prohibition it continued to be consumed, so that we find in 1376 a regular duty of 3d. per ton levied on all coal brought from Newcastle, soon after which coal was used as fuel in the royal palaces. Since the time of Charles I. it has become almost the only fuel used in London and most other towns and districts throughout the kingdom. The method of making coke by extracting the bituminous quality from coal was discovered by John Hackett, in 1627, who obtained a patent with the object of "rendering coal as useful as wood for fuel in houses without damaging the furniture or incommoding the inhabitants with smoke."

THE MAYOR OF GARRAT.—Southward of Wandsworth (a London suburb) a road extends nearly two miles to the village of Lower Tooting, and nearly midway are some houses (this was written about 1830) by the side of a small common called Garrat, from which the road itself is called Garrat Lane. Various encroachments on this common led to an association of the neighbours about sixty years since, when they chose a president or mayor, to protect their rights; and the time of their first election being the period of a new parliament, it was agreed that the mayor should be re-chosen after every general election. Some facetious members of the club gave in a few years local notoriety to this election; and when party spirit ran high in the days of "Wilkes and liberty," it was easy to create an appetite for a burlesque election among the humbler classes of the metropolis. The publicans at Wandsworth, Tooting, Battersea, Clapham, and Vauxhall made a purse to give it character; and Mr. Foote rendered its interest universal by calling one of his inimitable farces "The Mayor of Garrat." I have indeed been told that Foote, Garrick, and Wilkes, wrote some of the candidates' addresses, for the purpose of instructing people in the corruptions which attend elections to the legislature, and of producing those reforms by means of ridicule and shame which are vainly expected from solemn appeals of argument and patriotism. . . . The first mayor of whom I could hear was called Sir John Harper. He filled the seat during two parliaments, and was it appears a man of wit, for, on a dead cat being thrown at him on the hustings, and a bystander exclaiming that it smelt worse than a fox, Sir John vociferated, "That's no wonder, for you see it's a poll-cat!" This noted baronet was in London a retailer of brickdust; and his Garrat honours being supposed to be a means of improving his trade and the condition of his ass, many characters in similar occupations were led to aspire to the same distinction. He was succeeded by Sir Geoffrey Dunstan, a buyer of old wigs. Sir Geoffrey used to carry his bag over his shoulder, shouting "Old wigs;" but, having a person like Æsop, and a countenance and manner marked by humour, he never appeared without a train of boys and curious persons, whom he entertained by his sallies of wit, shrewd sayings, and smart repartees; and from whom, without begging, he collected sufficient to maintain his dignity of mayor and knight. He was no respecter of persons, and was so severe in his jokes on those in power that in 1793 he was tried, convicted, and imprisoned for using seditious language. In consequence of this and certain charges of dishonesty Sir Geoffrey lost his popularity. But in death as in life he proved a satire on the vices of mankind, for in 1797 he died, like Alexander the Great, and many other men renowned in the historic page—of suffocation from excessive drinking. . . . At length the victuallers having failed to raise a public purse, the borough of Garrat became and has since remained vacant.

FOOTE AT THE ELECTION.

FOOTE the great comedian came to Wandsworth to have a full view of all the goings on. This English Aristophanes paid nine guineas for the fore-room at Surgeon Squire's, facing the church, for himself and his friends to sit and see the fun. In Foote's comedy—sketched largely from life, and called "The Mayor of Garrat"—Sir Jacob Jollup, who has a house at Garrat, holds a dialogue with his man Roger concerning the company they expect. Here is an amusing extract.

SIE J.: Are the candidates near upon coming?

ROGER: Nic. Goose, the tailor from Putney, they say, will be here in a crack, Sir Jacob.

Sir J.: Has Margery fetched in the linen?

ROGER: Yes, Sir Jacob.

Sir J.: Are the pigs and the poultry locked up in the barn?

ROGER: Safe, Sir Jacob.

Sir J.: And the plate and the spoons in the pantry?

ROGER: Yes, Sir Jacob.

Sir J.: Then give me the key: the mob will soon be upon us; and all is fish that comes to their net. Has Ralph laid the cloth in the hall?

ROGER: Yes, Sir Jacob.

Sir J.: Then let him bring out the turkey and chine, and be sure there is plenty of mustard; and—d'yehear, Roger?—do you stand yourself at the gate and be careful whom you let in.

ROGER: I will, Sir Jacob. (Exit.)

Sir J.: So now I believe things are pretty secure.

MOB (Without): Huza!

Sir Jacob has work enough on his hands. Then, in another scene, enter Mob, with Heel-tap at their head; some crying "A Goose," others "A Mug," others "A Primmer."

HEELTAP: Silence, and let us proceed, neighbours, with all the decency and confusion usual on these occasions.

ALL: Ay ay, ay.

HEEL: Chosen by yourselves, and approved of by Sir Jacob.

ALL: True, true.

HEEL: Well, then, be silent and civil; stand back there, that gentleman without a shirt, and make room for your betters. Where's Simon Snuffle, the sexton?

SNUFFLE: Here.

HEEL: Let him come forward; we appoint him our secretary; for Simon is a scollard, and can read written hand; and so let him be respected accordingly.

MOB: Room for Master Snuffle.

HEEL: Here, stand by me; and let us, neighbours, proceed to open the preminure of the thing; but first your reverence to the lord of the manor; a long life and a merry one to our landlord, Sir Jacob. Huza!

SNUFFLE (Reads): "To the worthy inhabitants of the ancient corporation of Garrat; gentlemen, your votes and interest are humbly requested in favour of Timothy Goose, to succeed your late worthy mayor, Mr. Richard Dripping, in the said office, he being—"

HEEL: This goose is but a kind of gosling, a sort of sneaking scoundrel. Who is he?

SNUFFLE: A journeyman tailor from Putney.

HEEL: A journeyman tailor! A rascal, has he the impudence to transpire to be mayor? D'y'e consider, neighbours, the weight of this office? Why, it is a burden for the back of a porter; and can you think that this cross-legg'd, cabbage-eating son of a cucumber, this whey-faced ninny, who is but the ninth part of a man, has strength to support it?

MOB: No Goose! no goose!

This gives one a graphic idea of London suburban geniality and fun not quite a century ago.

HOW GIRLS ARE MADE STRAIGHT.—The Hindoo girls are graceful and exquisitely formed. From their earliest childhood they are accustomed to carry burdens on their heads. The water for family use is always brought by the girls in earthen jars, carefully poised in this way. The exercise is said to strengthen the muscles of the back, while the chest is thrown forward. No crooked

backs are seen in Hindostan. Dr. H. Spry says that this exercise of carrying small vessels of water on the head might be advantageously introduced into boarding schools and private families, and that it might entirely supersede the present machinery of dumb bells, backboard, skipping ropes, &c. The young ladies ought to be taught to carry the jar as these Hindoo women do, without ever touching it with their hands. The same practice of carrying water leads precisely to the same results in the south of Italy as in India. A Neapolitan female peasant will carry on her head a vessel full of water to the very brim over a rough road and not spill a drop of it, and the acquisition of this art or knack gives her the same erect and elastic gait.

FACETIÆ.

A "DEAD CERTAINTY."—Queen Anne.

Funny Folks.

SOME MEN ARE SO STUPID!

(SCENE: At the Vavasours' dance.)

WALTZER (to hostess's fair daughter): "So glad to find you alone at last, Miss Vavasour."

MISS V.: "You are—very kind."

WALTZER: "Not at all. But tell me, you are not engaged?"

MISS V.: "No-o."

WALTZER: "Then I may hope—"

MISS V.: "Oh, really, Captain Hawley, you must talk to mamma."

WALTZER (blankly): "What about?"

[Most opportunely the waltz strikes up, and they plunge into it.] Funny Folks.

TOO UTTERLY UTTER.

A SCIENTIFIC paper says that by the introduction of the telephone into water containing fish it has been discovered that fish utter singular vocal sounds. The obvious comment on this is "Very like a wail." Funny Folks.

THE PROPER WAY TO TREAT INEBRIATES.—Don't treat 'em. Funny Folks.

THE NEW HELMET.

In their joy at receiving an improved head-covering, the police may be said to be "Hail fellow, helmet," with the whole human race. By the protection of the nape of Robert's neck he is placed on a nape-ex of contentment, and will enjoy a sense of security unattainable before the helmet-amorphosis took place. Funny Folks.

"STRUCK OFF THE ROLES."—An actor out of an engagement. Funny Folks.

THE FLAUTISTS' PARADISE.—Tooting.

Funny Folks.

UN—"ANSWER"—ABLE.

(A Steamboat Impromptu.)

MEN at the wheel—tho' why I never knew—

Must neither speak, nor yet be spoken to.

This law eternal fitness should repeal:

Surely a spokes-man's beat to turn the wheel. Funny Folks.

HOLIDAY AMENITIES.

WHITSUNTIDE REVELLER: "Look here, I say, banged if there ain't a black hair in this stuff."

IRATE LANDLADY: "Well, I'm sure! I s'pose I ain't bound to keep a carrot-haired cook jest to please you, am I?" Funny Folks.

RUM REFLECTION ON THE RUM TAX.—Ah! we lead an Exchequered existence. Punch.

PLACE FOR ÆSTHETES TO LIVE.—Too-Too-ting. Punch.

"Old English Fair!" No, sir, we prefer a Young English fair. Real "Old English" Fayre" is beef and plum-pudding. Punch.

AN AUTHOR NOT QUITE "Too-too."—Mark Twain. Punch.

HARMONY.

BROWN (Philistine): "I heard it was all 'off' between you and Miss Roweshett."

WOBINSON (Æsthete): "Ya-as. Incompatibility of complexion!—she didn't suit my furniture!" Punch.

WHICH NOBODY CAN DENY.

"WHAT'S ASCOT, Mabel?"

"Oh, Ascot? It's a cup that horses race for before the Prince of Wales and suite."

"Whose suite?"

"Who's sweet? Why, the princess, of course." Punch.

"YOUNG GIRLS' HATS ARE VERY BECOMING AT PRESENT."

Be they Tuscan, French, or English,

of whatever shape or size,

With a fair young face below them and

a pair of watchet eyes,

When they're set on heads o'erflowing

with a wealth of sunny curls,

Wot ye wot hats are becoming to our

fresh young English girls!

Punch.

It is Mr. Chamberlain who has told us that the Premier "stakes everything" upon the Land Bill. The Premier himself tells us nothing. He is reticent when he stakes everything, he was communicative enough a year or so since when he chopped everything.

Moonshine.

AT YE PANCTE FATRE.

MRS. PARIS MODE, OF THE "FROU-FROU GAZETTE" (to Mr. Egosum, of the "Portland Place Chronicle"): "Can you show me the Dunchess Dublazondor? I see from your paper that you were at her reception last week."

[Confusion of Mr. Egosum, who does not know her grace from Adam.] Moonshine.

EQUAL TO THE TIMES.

AUNT: "And so you won't be a soldier, Johnny, when you grow up, like Tommy Wilkins?"

JOHNNY: "Indeed I won't; Tommy Wilkins hit me yesterday. I'll be a priest, and then I can make 'em throw stones at him." Moonshine.

Among the "bank holiday charges," so profusely reported by the verbose penny-a-liners, we do not see any mention of the bank holiday charges of the cabmen, who on this occasion were most extortionate in their demands.

Moonshine.

"LET us take a walk," said the milkman to his full cans. Moonshine.

THE MAIDEN AND THE LILY.

(An Æsthetic Li-lyric.)

A MAIDEN bloomed in a cottage,

A king lily bloomed beside,

The maiden so loved the lily,

She vowed that she'd be his bride.

The lily consented gladly;

They made a beautiful pair—

The lily—the stately lily—

And his sweetheart—oh, so fair!

She loved the lily so fondly,

She guarded it from the wind,

She spread around it soft mosses,

The choicest she could find.

And all went well with the lovers,

Till one day, overwhelmed with bliss,

She broke him to bits with her elbow,

Which left but his stalk to kiss.

Moonshine.

SEQUEL TO THE FORTUNE BAY FISHERY DISPUTE.

"WHAT is your fortune, my pretty maid?"

"The bay is my fortune, kind sir," she said.

"How so, indeed, my very 'cute maid?"

"Well, sir, you see, the British have paid

Pounds £15,000—a nice nest-egg laid

For, gratefully yours, YANKEE MAID."

Moonshine.

ATTE YE ALBERTE HALLE.

THAT "Ye Olde Englishe Fancie Faire" in aid of the Chelsea Hospital for Women was a wonderful success goes without saying. The idea was a grand one, and so were the ladies that carried it out. The building itself is a big hall, but the amount of money taken by the countesses was a bigger haul. Of course on such an occasion the prices realised were "Fancy" ones, and anything but "Fair" for the purchaser; but as it was for a charity, it wouldn't do to say anything uncharitable, though if we did it would only be in "Fun."

STATISTICS.

THE FOOD SUPPLY OF LONDON.—The twelfth annual statement of the Markets Committee of the Corporation shows that during the year the weight of goods brought into the London central meat, provision, and poultry markets was 218,790 tons 6 cwt. 3 qrs., yielding an equivalent toll of £24,310 0s. 9d. The amount of rental paid to the Chamberlain during the past year has been from the meat market £35,613 5s. 2d. (exclusive of £2,000, the rent of the substructure), and from the poultry market £16,402 0s. 8d., making a total rental of £52,015 5s. 10d. This with the amount of toll, viz., £24,094 5s. 7d., makes a total payment to the Chamberlain of £76,109 11s. 5d.

GOLD AND SILVER PRODUCTION.—From 1493 to 1875 the quantity of silver produced reached 397,125,287 lbs. avoirdupois, which at 4s. 6d. per oz. gives a value of £1,429,650,961. From 1876 to 1880 the total production of silver is estimated at 76,900,000 lbs. weight, of an estimated value of £21,786,250. The production of gold from 1493 to 1875 reached in weight 20,797,359 lbs. avoirdupois, worth, at 24 per oz., £1,331,030,976; and from 1876 to 1880, 1,668,000 lbs. avoirdupois, value £106,600,000. Of the silver produced from 1493 to 1875, £167,651,880 came from Mexico, £68,688,400 from Peru, and £82,978,720 from Potosi (Bolivia). From 1876 to 1880 the production of the United States was £39,900,000, as compared with Mexico £27,000,000. "Other countries" produced a total estimated at £10,000,000. The proportion of gold to silver was 11 per cent. from 1493 to 1520. It then sank gradually from 7 in 1521-44 to 2 from 1560 to 1660. From 1661 to 1840 it fluctuated from 4 to 2. In 1841-50 it rose to 7. From 1851-55 it was 18; 1856-60, 19; 1861-65, 14; 1866-70, 13; 1871-80, 8. Of the whole supply of gold three-fifths have been produced in the last forty years.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

LOBSTER CROQUETTES.—Take the meat of two lobsters and chop it; slice one small onion, and brown it in a tablespoonful of butter. When it is cooked and off the fire incorporate into this two tablespoonfuls of flour, adding a little milk. To your chopped lobster add parsley, a little salt, and a little red pepper. Bind the lobster together with the yolks of four eggs, and then mix thoroughly with your butter in which the onion was cooked. Shape properly, and dip them in bread crumbs and the yolk of an egg. Fry in boiling lard.

MEAT JELLY.—We have found the following jelly excellent and nutritious when given to an invalid, the receipt coming from the doctor: One calf's foot and one pound of veal; this put in four pints of water and boiled very slowly for fully five hours; when the water was reduced to one-third it was strained, the seasoning of a little pepper and salt and nutmeg being added last. This jelly keeps quite well. It should have no vegetables in it, or it will spoil.

POTTED HAM.—Take any remains of ham you have; even fried, if of a nice quality, is good for the purpose; take away all stringy parts, sinew, or gristle; put in a slow oven with its weight of butter; let it stay macerating in the

butter till it is very tender; then beat it in a mortar; add cayenne, and pack in pots.

THE OLD STORY AGAIN.

SHE stood with head half turned away,
The queenly head, in its tender grace.
The soft hair blew, a golden mass,
About the dimpled, sweet young face.
The pansy eyes, with their lashes dark,
Saw only the ever-restless tide,
The long, cool sweep of the foam-tipped waves,
And never the passionate man at her side.

"Only one word," he says, in despair.
"I love you so, my beautiful one!"
"Did you ever hear such a noisy tide?"
She answers, shading her eyes from the sun.

"Do you see those sea-birds circle about,
And dip their heads in that sportive way,
As if the sea were but made for them
And the sunshiny summer day?"

"My little bird," he whispers low,
"Turn your eyes away from the sea.
What care I for the sweeping tide,
If it bring not your love to me?
Pansy eyes with their purple depth,
May I kiss their lids apart?
Lay those little white hands in mine,
Let me hold them against my heart."

She turns her eyes with their wondrous light,

The sun on her hair's golden sheen;
The red, red lips are sweet as a rose,
And the teeth glitter white between.
"Somebody whispered the same last night!"

She says in her girlish way.
"And the man was a count with his lands so broad—
And how could I tell him nay?"

The band is playing some wild, new air,

The roar of the tide comes between;
The moon at its full shines down on the sea,

And decks it with silver gleam.
A girlish form in its robes of white,
With jasmine on her breast,
Looks over the crowd with her yearning eyes,

And a heart that will not rest.

And away from them all, in the starlit night,
Strides her lover with gloomy face,
She steals to his side with downcast eyes

And stands there in timid grace.
Two little hands like snow-white birds
Touch him, that he may see.

"The tide comes in," she says, with a blush,
"And it brings my love to thee."

He takes her into his sheltering arms
With a wildly beating heart.
"Whither thou goest I will go,
And never from thee will part!"

The mad surf breaks on the sandy beach,
The band plays its wildest strain;
But these two walk in Eden's bloom,
As he tells the old story again. E. L.

MISCELLANEOUS.

YET another scheme for crossing the channel by railway has been brought forward. The

originator is Mr. Braiford Leslie, the engineer of the East India Railway Company. Brushing aside such ideas as those connected with tunnels and bridges, he proposes that we shall travel into France through a cylindrical steel tube submerged 40 feet below the surface of the water. The tube would be so ballasted as to make it weigh $1\frac{1}{2}$ ton to the foot less than the water displaced, its buoyancy being counter-balanced by moorings at every 250 feet. At the shore ends it would be laid in dredged or excavated channels, and would be made to rise from the mid-channel depths by easy gradients. The cost of carrying out this scheme is estimated to be £8,000,000.

CALIFORNIA sends hundreds of thousands of gallons of claret to France every year.

JAR GOULD drew a cheque the other day upon the National Bank of New York for £500,000. This was not bad for a man whose whole fortune, when he first went to New York, consisted of a patent mousetrap.

THE restaurants and large cafés in Berlin have lately rejected ordinary stone ware and china plates for those of papier-maché. The change seems to be pleasing to all concerned. Breakages are at an end; and the articles have so little intrinsic value that the guests are allowed to carry them away for the sake of their prettiness.

AFTER the information afforded by "A Manufacturer" in a recent letter to the Times, it will be strange if the Post Office do not establish "a sample post." "A Manufacturer" recently despatched 2,000 samples, weighing $2\frac{1}{2}$ ounces each, addressed to persons residing in England, for rather less than a penny a piece by posting them in Belgium. If they had been posted in this country the charge would have been 2d. each. By this transaction alone the Post Office lost rather more than £190.

In the June number of "The Family Physician," there will be found this "wholesome" bit of advice: An eminent physician once told his friend that, if he desired to escape the "horrors of dyspepsia," the best thing he could do would be to eat an ounce or two of fine fresh fruit before breakfast every morning. "But look here," said the doctor, "do not let that prescription go out of your own family, for doctors, like other men, must live, and if it became generally known that a little early fruit-eating would prevent the long series of troubles that result from indigestion, I should lose the most of my patients."

A COMMITTEE has been formed for the purpose of promoting a daily performance of band music in parks. From the present time to the end of August the band will play from five p.m. to eight p.m. On Mondays, in Battersea Park; on Tuesdays, in Regent's Park; on Wednesdays, in Victoria Park; on Thursdays, in Regent's Park; on Fridays, in Hyde Park; on Saturdays, in Hyde Park. Among the members of the committee are the Countess of Jersey, Lady Fanny Marjoribanks, Miss Alice de Rothschild, Miss Van der Weyer, Lady Goldsmid, Viscountess Ossington, Hon. Mrs. Meynell Ingram, Mrs. Stephen Kalli, and a number of members of both Houses of Parliament and others.

A GOOD story was told apropos of a noble lord who was recently returning from the races. In the adjoining compartment were eight book-makers who, cleaned out by successive failures, were travelling without tickets, hoping by a turn of good luck to escape payment. At last one of them during a stoppage hit upon a brilliant idea. Pulling his cap down over his eyes and buttoning his coat he went to the carriage of the noble lord and his friends, and assuming an official air, collected all their tickets. These he distributed among his own friends, and on the train reaching London the noble lord had a narrow escape of seeing himself and his friends taken into custody for attempting to defraud the railway company, for despite their assurances the officials declined to believe that anyone had been audacious enough to collect these passengers' tickets. The thing was too absurd. It was only by paying their fare a second time that the noble lord and his friends escaped from the clutches of the railway servants.

CONTENTS.

Page	Page
HIS BITTER FOX; OR, A STRUGGLE FOR A HEART ... 217	POETRY... 239
SCIENCE ... 220	MISCELLANEOUS... 239
HELD FOR RANSOM ... 221	CORRESPONDENCE ... 240
CURE FOR SMALLPOX ... 225	
LINK BY LINK ... 225	No.
GUS MORETON STAKE (A NOVELLETTE) ... 229	LINK BY LINK com- menced in... 240
PARTY'S RINGS (A SHORT STORY) ... 234	
OUR COLUMBS FOR THE CURIOUS ... 237	HIS BITTER FOX; OR, A STRUGGLE FOR A HEART, commenced in... 244
FACTILE ... 238	
THE RAILWAY ACROSS THE CHANNEL... 239	HELD FOR RANSOM commenced in... 248
STATISTICS ... 239	
HOUSEHOLD TREA- SURE... 239	

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS should in all cases furnish us with their names and addresses. Letters signed simply with initials or a nom de plume may not always receive immediate attention, as our space is limited. No charge is made under any circumstances for advertisements appearing on this page.

S. F. W.—A good way to correct your grammatical errors is to mix with cultivated people, and carefully observe their language. We know of no book that would take the place of such training, nor have we any knowledge of the treatise you mention. A careful study of the rules of English grammar would of course be of great service.

E. M. R.—The great Russian diamond, now in the sceptre of Russia, weighs 193 carats, or over one ounce. The original weight of the Kohinoor was 800 carats, which was reduced to 279 by the unskilfulness of the artist who cut it.

A. S. W.—The yellow stain made by the oil used on sewing-machines can be removed if, before washing in soap, you rub the spot carefully with a bit of cloth wet with ammonia.

D. B. K.—The pronunciation of the name is Enderby, the accent on the second syllable.

E. M. W.—A number of coal mines are being worked under the ocean. In Northumberland the net available quantity of coal under the sea is estimated at 403,000,000 tons, and on the Durham coast under the sea, including a breadth of three and a half miles with an area of seventy-one square miles, 734,500,000 tons. The latter mine is in a vein of an aggregate thickness of thirty feet, distributed in six seams.

L. M.—In explaining to you the derivation of the term, "in spite of his teeth," we also give you an instance of the tyranny and cruelty of feudal times. King John had demanded of a Jew 10,000 marks. On being refused the king ordered one of the Jew's teeth to be drawn daily till he complied. The unfortunate Jew lost seven teeth, and then yielded to the tyrant the sum required. Hence the phrase "in spite of his teeth." When next you hear it you will think of the "good old times!"

W. E.—A purser is an officer who has charge of the provisions, etc., and of the moneys on shipboard.

T. H.—When the Jablochkoff light on the Victoria Embankment was first installed the charge was sixpence per lamp per hour; but as the experiment went on and the new order of things settled down the price was reduced, and it now stands at three halfpence per lamp per hour, about the same as that paid for gas.

H. P.—To make a Seidlitz powder, take of Rochelle salts, one dram; bi-carbonate of soda, twenty-five grains; tartaric acid, twenty grains. Dissolve the first two in a third of a tumbler of water; then add the latter, and swallow without loss of time.

C. W.—To remove common black ink from parchment: Moisten the spots first with a strong solution of oxalic acid, then with a clear saturated aqueous solution of fresh chloride of lime (bleaching). Absorb excess of the liquids from the paper as quickly as possible with a clean piece of blotting paper. Repeat the treatment if necessary, and dry thoroughly between blotting pads under pressure.

H. M. T.—Concerning the extermination of moths in carpets and furniture we find that a correspondent of a contemporary recommends the following remedy: After some years of experience with the troublesome pests, says the writer, I found a sure preventive of moths in pitch paper, the same as roofers use. The moth will live and grow on cayenne pepper and tobacco, while I never could see that the use of these articles kept the moth miller out. The plan for the furniture dealer or housewife is to cut the paper in slips and place about the room, under and behind sofas, chairs, etc.; this should be done as early as the middle of April, and in warm climates earlier. If the dealer wishes to make parlour suites moth proof, he should place on the inside of backs of chairs and seats small strips of the pitch paper, and rest assured that the miller will not select these places to deposit eggs. It is the miller that is the foundation of all the mischief.

NOTICE.

The Opening Chapters of a NEW SERIAL STORY will appear in our Next Number.

DARK-EYED MARGUERITE and PRETTY MAUD, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Dark-eyed Marguerite is sixteen, medium height, brown hair, dark eyes. Pretty Maud is twenty, tall, black hair, blue eyes. Respondents must be between eighteen and twenty-two, tall, fair, blue eyes.

FRED H. and ARTHUR O., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Fred H. is twenty-one, tall, dark, good-looking. Arthur O. is eighteen, medium height, fair, good-looking. Respondents must be between seventeen and twenty, good-looking.

A PITIFUL CASE.

I.
I'm sitting alone in my dreary room,
Alone, in the midst of a city full,
And my heart is so heavy and full of gloom
That I'm sure it is really pitiful.
For my room is cold,
And I'm getting old,
And the worst of it is, my sorry plight
Just serves me right. Just serves me right!

II.
I have rheumatism in every joint,
And my teeth are all of them aching.
Though "care of self" is my cardinal point,
Just see how my hands are shaking.
And I must complain,
That I don't hear plain;
And I'm bothered a deal about my sight;
But it serves me right. It serves me right!

III.
It's worry and worry about my things,
It is buying and losing and lending,
I've a regular fight with buttons and strings,
I've a daily sorting and mending.
And there's none to care
How I feel or fare;
For I'm old and poor, and safe to alight,
And it serves me right. It serves me right!

IV.
Oh, if I had married sweet Mary McRay,
Or even the beautiful Kitty,
I would not be lonely and cold to-day,
I'd have plenty of kindness and pity.
But I said to myself,
Take care of yourself,
You've enough to do for yourself to fight,
So I'm all alone—and it serves me right!

V.
There's LAWSON, he married at twenty-two,
I met him to-day in the city,
Jolly and healthy and well-to-do,
And he said to me: "Smith, what a pity
You have not a wife
To comfort your life—
I saw both Mary and Kitty last night—
They are married and well—and it serves you
right!"

VI.
Yes, it serves me right, and when weary and cold,
I think of the love I have flung away.
Young men, marry before you are old,
Or else with me you may have to say—
There are none to care
How I feel or fare—
I'm ugly and cross, and day and night
I say to myself, "It serves you right!"

IRISH BOY, eighteen, medium height, fair, brown hair, would like to correspond with a young lady about seventeen.

LILLIE and ALICE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Lillie is nineteen, medium height, dark. Alice is twenty, medium height, fair, fond of dancing.

JAMES and THOMAS, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. James is twenty-six, tall, dark, good-looking. Thomas is twenty-five, medium height, fair, of a loving disposition.

PINK and RUBY, two friends, would like to correspond with two dark, good-looking young gentlemen. Pink is nineteen, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes. Ruby is twenty-three, fair hair, brown eyes.

JEANETTE, LAURA, LOUISE, and ADELAIDE, four friends, would like to correspond with four young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Jeanette is twenty-four, tall, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. Laura is twenty-one, tall, fair, fond of music and dancing. Louise is twenty, tall, blue eyes. Adelaide is nineteen, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, fond of home. Respondents must be from twenty to thirty, good-looking.

JEMIMA, WILHELMINA and LILY, three friends, would like to correspond with three good-looking young gentlemen. Jemima is twenty-three, brown hair, fond of home and children. Wilhelmina is twenty-two, dark hair and eyes, good-looking. Lily is fifteen, tall, fond of music.

ONE ALONE, twenty-two, tall, dark, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony.

CATALY, a widower, thirty-four, medium height, would like to correspond with a widow between twenty-seven and thirty with a view to matrimony.

ISABEL, MAGGIE and NELLIE, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Isabel is twenty-three, tall, dark, good-looking. Maggie is twenty-two, tall, fair, blue eyes. Nellie is nineteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, good-looking.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

J. is responded to by—Miss G.
JAMES by—Gip, medium height, dark.
SAMUEL by—Floss, medium height, fair.
MAGGIE M. by—R. G. R., twenty-two, tall, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition.
MAGGIE M. by—W. A., twenty-three, fair, good-looking.

JENNIE by—A Dangerous Character, twenty-one, tall, dark.

ALPHA by—Belle L., eighteen, medium height, fair.
MAGGIE M. by—Ernest, twenty-one, medium height, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.
J. by—Ethel, nineteen, tall, fair, brown hair, hazel eyes, fond of home.

ALPHA by—Winnie C., nineteen, short, dark, of a loving disposition.

DAVID by—Kathleen S., twenty-three, fair, of a loving disposition.

W. by—Edith, seventeen, medium height, brown hair, grey eyes, fond of home.

BILL by—Dolly G., seventeen.

ERNEST by—Mabel H., nineteen, of a loving disposition.

LILY Y. by—Burton P., twenty-one, tall, dark, of a loving disposition.

H. H. by—Lillian, eighteen, tall, dark hair, blue eyes.

C. C. by—Edith, eighteen, tall, dark.

CHARLEY by—B. F., twenty, medium height, dark hair and eyes.

LILY Y. by—J. G.

NOBLE ALICE by—A. D., nineteen, tall, blue eyes, fond of home and children.

DAVID by—Fanny R. dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

CHARLEY by—Isa, twenty-one, medium height, fair, fond of home and children.

WILLIAM by—Maggie A., twenty, medium height, of a loving disposition.

WILLIAM by—Katie, nineteen, medium height, fair.

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NOTICE.—Part 224 (June) Now Ready, Price Sixpence; post free, Eightpence.

N.B.—Correspondents must address their Letters to the Editor of the LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily authors should retain copies.

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